

**For Immediate Release**

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**Students face-off at Western Dairy Challenge to prepare for nationals**

*55 students from six universities put their knowledge to the test*

Fresno, Calif., March 7, 2011 – Fifty-five students from five western universities and one Canadian university competed in the sixth annual Western Regional Dairy Challenge March 3-5, 2011 in Fresno, Calif.

Hosted by Fresno State University, the Western Regional Dairy Challenge is an innovative management analysis competition developed by industry and university professionals from across the U.S.

A key objective of the dairy challenge is to present students with real-life situations that stress the importance of teamwork and professionalism.

Students from the different universities were partnered in teams of four or five. In preparation of being divided into teams, Charlene McLaughlin of Elanco Animal Health conducted a team building exercise. The exercise was to help the students to understand and recognize different personality types and to prepare them to work with their new team members.

Once the aggregate teams are formed, each group conducts a comprehensive evaluation of a working dairy farm. The evaluation includes everything from cow comfort and herd health to reproduction and finances. The teams are looking for opportunities to improve operational efficiency of the dairy farm being evaluated and ideas to improve that particular dairy's bottom-line.

This contest is a hands-on event where students take what they have learned at the various schools and actually apply it to real-life situations, says Tami Tollennar, 2011 Western Regional Dairy Challenge Chair.

Participating universities at this year's competition included: the University of Alberta (Canada), University of Idaho, Washington State University, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Texas A&M University and the California State University of Fresno.

The host farm for this year's Western Regional Dairy Challenge was Diamond H Dairy a 4,500-cow operation in Chowchilla, Calif. Diamond H Dairy is owned by Greg and Jennifer Hooker.

The owner of this year's contest farm says he was interested in hosting the event to get different perspectives on his operation. "Students get an opportunity to learn and I get a fresh set of eyes to evaluate my operation and hopefully come up with some ideas that I can apply – there is a mutual benefit in hosting the event," says Hooker. He also adds that he wishes there was an event like this when he was in college.

Judges for this year's competition were: Bud Keister with Cargill Animal Nutrition; Henry Tevelde, JVI Dairies; Michael DeGroot with DeGroot Dairy Consulting; Claudio Ribeiro with Western Milling; Brian

Mitchell with J.D. Heiskell & Company; Chad Wright with Walco Vet Outlet; and Scott Tripp with DHI-Provo.

Judges at this year's competition agree that the dairy challenge is one of the best development tools for dairy science students to see and evaluate dairies and then be judged by recognized experts in the industry. "Students who participate in these events are our future industry leaders, dairy farmers and allied industry," says Henry Tevelde, owner of JVJ Dairies and judge at this year's competition. "It's a Joy to see the quality of the students who participate each year."

**Receiving Platinum awards were:**

Philip deVries - Washington State University, Jami Lady - California State University Fresno, Heather Fleck - University of Alberta, Jennifer Trice - Washington State University, Tyler Reynolds - University of Idaho

**Receiving Gold awards were:**

Edward DeJager - California State University Fresno, Keliesha Roth - University of Alberta, Jeff Blickenstaff - University of Idaho, Everet Leyendekker - California State University Fresno, Nicole Hoff - Texas A&M University.

Students from the regional contest will go on to compete at the national contest which will be held March 31-April 2, 2011 in Hickory, N.C. This will be the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge and it will be hosted by North Carolina State University and Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

*About Dairy Challenge*

The mission of the North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge is to facilitate education, communication and an exchange of ideas among students, agribusiness, dairy producers and universities that enhances the development of the dairy industry and its leaders.

The program is fully funded through the generous support of companies and producer associations serving the dairy industry, as well as a growing number of individual dairy business owners. For more information or to become a sponsor of the Dairy Challenge program, visit [www.dairychallenge.org](http://www.dairychallenge.org) or contact Molly J. Kelley, NAIDC Executive Director, at [naidc@wdexpo.com](mailto:naidc@wdexpo.com).

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*Note to editors:* Photo are available at [http://www.dairychallenge.org/ws\\_event.php](http://www.dairychallenge.org/ws_event.php)

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55 students from 5 western universities and one Canadian university competed in the sixth annual Western Regional Dairy Challenge, March 3-5, 2011 in Fresno, Calif.

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Students met with Diamond H Dairy prior to conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the farm; evaluating everything from cow comfort and herd health to reproduction and finances.