

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **49 Students from Colleges Participate in 12th Annual Western Regional Dairy Challenge**

Forty-nine students from four Western US universities and one Canadian college traveled to Twin Falls, Idaho for the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Western Dairy Challenge on February 23 – 25, 2017. The contest was hosted by the University of Idaho and headquartered at the College of Southern Idaho's campus.

The Western Dairy Challenge is a three-day educational competition designed to prepare students for dairy careers. Working in mixed-university teams of four or five students, participants assessed all aspects of a working dairy farm, including facilities, nutrition, financials, reproduction, and animal health. Students collaborated on a 20-minute team presentation that detailed their observations and suggestions to a panel of judges. Teams were ranked based on how well their evaluations matched the judges' evaluations of the dairy operation.

On Thursday students listened to a session on immigration challenges and how that relates to the dairy industry's needs for a ready and available workforce. They also kicked off the competition portion of the event where they assembled into aggregate teams (meeting their new teammates from other universities for the first time) and spent the evening diving into the host dairy's records to assess the strengths and weaknesses that show up in the numbers.

West Point Farm, owned by Edwin Southfield, Tony Vander Hulst, and Jesse Koopman, graciously welcomed the teams to their dairy on Friday where students spent 3 1/2 hours walking the facility, observing the cows and the management aspects of the operation. Following the on-farm assessment, the students participated in a question and answer session with the management team of the dairy. Several sponsors attending the event networked with and mentored the students throughout the weekend.

On Saturday morning, students presented their findings to a panel of judges made up of a nutritionist, a veterinarian, a financier, and a dairy producer who ranked them on their conclusions and performance. Students also had the opportunity to hear the judging panel's full critique of the dairy's opportunities to round out this learning experience.

#### **Platinum teams:**

Team #3 – Pine Creek: Katelyn Petersen (University of Idaho), Nicholas Bauer (University of Idaho), Marilyn Van Beek (Cal Poly), and Sarah Olsen (Utah State University)

Team #4 - Kirby: Marcy Bartelheimer (Washington State University), Erin Carlson (University of Alberta), Francesca Gambonini (Cal Poly), and Colton Biedenbach (University of Idaho)

Team #6 - Granite: Andrew Papineau (University of Idaho), Willa Wang (University of Alberta), Grace Montgomery (Washington State University), and Camryn Spencer (Cal Poly).

#### **Gold teams:**

Team #10 – North Fork: Emily Butner (Cal Poly), Talia Letcher (University of Alberta), Elizabeth Russell (Cal Poly), and Kaleb Bateman (Utah State University)

Team #11 – Snake River: Kelly Bjerke (Utah State University), Sarah Nowicki (University of Alberta), Emma Sills (Cal Poly), and Katie Migliazzo (Cal Poly)  
Team #12 - Salmon: Tracy Nelson (Cal Poly), Stephanie Gartner (University of Alberta), Cody McCary (Utah State University), Miranda McCurry (Cal Poly), and Teresa Erwin (Washington State University)

A committee of dairy industry representatives organized the Challenge. A long list of volunteers was important to the competition's success. To volunteer or become a sponsor for the 2018 contest, contact Cathy Myers at [cathyd@dhiprovo.com](mailto:cathyd@dhiprovo.com) or Renee Smith at [rsmith@omegabalancer.com](mailto:rsmith@omegabalancer.com). All contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Contributing sponsor listings are available on the website.

The Western Dairy Challenge is under the guidance and support of the North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge (NAIDC), which was established in April 2002 as a management contest to incorporate evaluation of all aspects of a specific dairy business. For more information, visit [www.dairychallenge.org](http://www.dairychallenge.org). The regional event leads to the national contest of the same format, held March 30-April 1, 2017, in Visalia, CA.

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**Google Photos Link:**

**<https://goo.gl/photos/oRJTBecsXqk2u3XA>**