



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Florida Hosts Virtual Southern Regional Dairy Challenge®

Like all aspects of the world in which we find ourselves today, Dairy Challenge had to adapt the 2020 regional contests to ensure the safety of our students, coaches, judges, and volunteers. Ultimately, the decision was made to move the 15th annual Southern Regional contest to a virtual format. Fifty-five students from 13 colleges participated in this year's revolutionary event. Rather than the traditional 3-day format, this year's Southern Regional Dairy Challenge was held over the course of a month. Farm data was distributed on September 22, followed by 3 weeks of virtual training sessions for students, farm manager interviews, and team preparation. Students uploaded pre-recorded presentations October 19th and rounded out this year's contest with a virtual sponsor career fair, question and answer session with the judges, and an awards ceremony on October 22nd. The events were coordinated by the southern region planning committee.

Traditionally, students at the Southern Regional Contest are placed into composite teams to encourage networking with other students. This year for safety and simplicity, the teams more closely resembled the National Contest and consisted of 3 to 6 students from the same university, with the exception of 2 composite teams. As always, students competed for awards based on their farm analysis and appropriate solutions. Their farm presentations were evaluated by a panel of judges, including dairy producers, veterinarians, finance specialists and seasoned agribusiness personnel.

Dairy Challenge Applies Learning to a Real-world Dairy

Over its 18-year history, Dairy Challenge has helped more than 5,000 students prepare for careers in the dairy industry, dairy production and veterinary medicine.

The one-month virtual event began on September 22 with a contest welcome, instructions, data distribution, and breakout sessions where team members were introduced to their mentors. The opening session was held live via Zoom and included a team ice-breaker event so that students were still able to interact with each other. This session and all others were recorded for students to watch later if they were unable to attend live.

The next 3 weeks of the contest included a variety of educational training seminars for students, including the following topics:

- Dairy Records by Kas Ingawa (DRMS)
- Farm Financials by Alex White (Virginia Tech)
- Reproduction by Melanie Herman (Select Sires)
- Nutrition and Feed Management by Jeff Elliot (Balchem)
- How to Use a Partial Budget by Bradley Mills (Zoetis)
- Milking and Udder Health by John Laster (Dairy Diagnostic Lab Services)

Students met either in-person or virtually with their coaches and mentors over the next 3 weeks to assess farm data and develop a team presentation with recommendations for nutrition, reproduction, milking procedures, animal health, cow comfort, and labor and financial management. Pre-recorded team presentations were due October 19th, and over the next 3 days, judges met to review and score team presentations. On October 22, students attended a virtual sponsor career fair, which included representatives from ABS Global, Agri-King,

Alta Genetics, Cargill, Dairy Records Management Systems, Farm Credit, GENEX, PEAK, Select Sires, and VAS. Additionally, each team had a designated time slot for questions and answers with their judging panel, followed by the judges presentation and an awards ceremony.

The following teams were announced as first place winners for each judging group*:

Group A: Team 4 – Clemson University – Hannah Culler, Kendall Richey, Geneffer Sweatman, and Sara Wint.

Group B: Team 9 – University of Georgia – Dawson Fields, Mary Hillis, Tate Hunda, Alyssa Rauton, and William Strickland.

Group C: Team 12 – Virginia Tech – John McGehee, Catherine Savage, Jessi Jordan, and Cady McGehee.

*All students evaluated the same farm but were split into groups and judged by their respective judging panel.

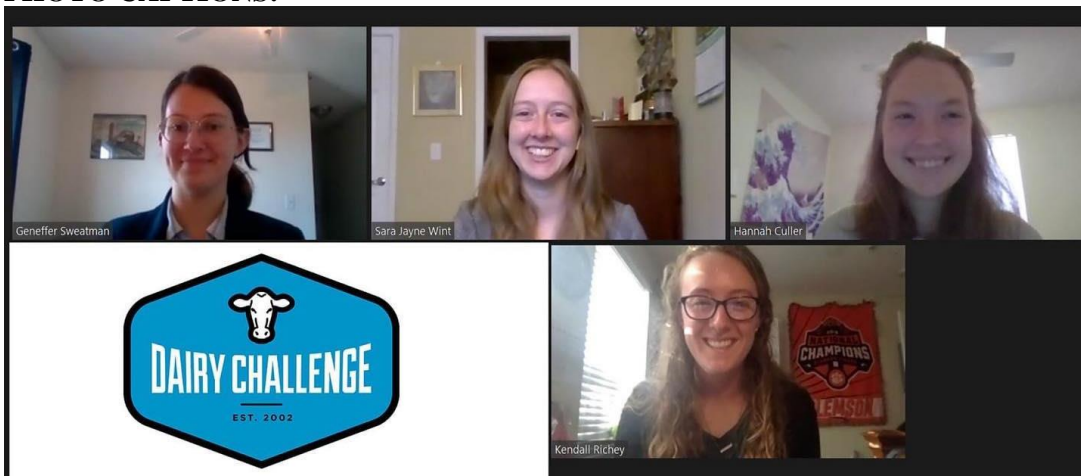
Total Industry Effort

The University of Florida host farm graciously invited students in for analysis and in exchange, received a wealth of ideas from students and judges. This event would not have been possible without Dr. Albert DeVries at the University of Florida, Kas Ingawa, Southern Region Dairy Challenge Chair, Molly Kelley, Executive Director NAIDC, the Southern Regional planning committee, team mentors, volunteers, and all of the gracious sponsors. Additionally, we want to extend a thank you to all involved for making this year's Southern Regional contest not only possible, but a successful, positive, and safe experience for all.

About Dairy Challenge

The North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge is an innovative event for students in dairy programs at North American post-secondary institutions. Its mission is to develop tomorrow's dairy leaders and enhance progress of the dairy industry, by providing education, communication and networking among students, producers, and agribusiness and university personnel. Over its 18-year national history, Dairy Challenge has helped prepare more than 5,000 students for careers as farm owners and managers, consultants, researchers, veterinarians or other dairy professionals. The next national event also be hosted in Green Bay, Wisconsin, April 15-17, 2021. Four regional events are held in late fall and winter; details are at www.dairychallenge.org.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:



2020 Southern Regional Dairy Challenge first place team group A

Caption: Earning first place honors at the 2020 Southern Regional Dairy Challenge for group A was team 4 from Clemson University.

Top Row: Geneffer Sweatman, Sara Wint, and Hannah Culler

Bottom Row: Kendall Richey



2020 Southern Regional Dairy Challenge first place team group B

Caption: Earning first place honors at the 2020 Southern Regional Dairy Challenge for group B was team 9 from the University of Georgia.

Top Row: Alyssa Rauton and Dawson Fields

Bottom Row: Tate Hunda, William Strickland, and Mary Hillis



2020 Southern Regional Dairy Challenge first place team group C

Caption: Earning first place honors at the 2020 Southern Regional Dairy Challenge for group C was team 12 from Virginia Tech.

Top Row: Catherine Savage

Middle Row: Cady McGehee and Jessi Jordan

Bottom Row: John McGehee



2020 Southern Regional host farm manager interview

Caption: Students interviewed University of Florida dairy farm manager Eric Williams round-robin style virtually on October 6, 2020.



2020 Southern Regional host university

Caption: University of Florida coach Dr. Albert DeVries explains to students where to find all of the farm data, photos, and videos.