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California Hosts 16th Annual Dairy Challenge®

Visalia, Calif, April 2, 2017 – College dairy students – 230 in total – from 25 states and three Canadian provinces traversed to sunny California for the 16th annual Dairy Challenge.® This was the first time many of the students had visited a western dairy, which provided extra intrigue and challenge in their task as a consultant team for a local dairy.

Visalia, Calif., was home base for the 2017 North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge® (NAIDC) held March 30 to April 1, with seven area dairies participating in the educational event. Dairy students from 37 colleges worked to improve their dairy management and communication skills, networked with other students, and explored industry careers.

“The California dairy community really came together to make possible this premier college event – from host dairies, to agribusiness sponsors and dairy product donors, and the more than 100 volunteers that helped plan and coordinate the Dairy Challenge,” explained Chad Wright, DVM, of Bidart Dairy and co-chair of the event planning committee.

Dairy Challenge is a unique, real-world experience where dairy students work as a team and apply their college coursework to evaluate and provide solutions for an operating dairy farm. In Visalia, two programs ran concurrently – the 16th annual Dairy Challenge contest and the fifth annual Dairy Challenge Academy. The events were coordinated by the NAIDC Board of Directors and the western planning committee.

This year’s contest included 34 universities, whose four-person teams competed for awards based on their quality of teams’ farm analysis and appropriate solutions. Their farm presentations were evaluated by a panel of five judges, including dairy producers, veterinarians, finance specialists and seasoned agribusiness personnel.

The Academy provided interactive training for nearly 90 students from four-year universities or two-year dairy programs. Academy participants were divided into smaller groups including students from various schools, and dairy industry volunteers worked as Advisors to coach these less-experienced Academy participants as they assessed the dairy and developed recommendations.

Dairy Challenge Applies Learning to a Real-world Dairy

Over its 16-year history, Dairy Challenge has helped more than 5,000 students prepare for careers in the dairy industry, dairy production and veterinary medicine.

“Dairy Challenge is a tremendous collaboration between universities, dairy producers and agribusinesses – all working together toward a common mission to help develop tomorrow’s dairy leaders and continually improve the dairy industry,” said Amy te Plate-Church of Look East PR and NAIDC board chair. “It’s inspiring to hear the individual stories from participants. Many have gotten jobs through Dairy Challenge, or they decided to work in the dairy industry because of Dairy Challenge. Host farms have implemented solutions that made a real difference, and dairy science curriculums are ever-evolving to teach students the skills necessary for success in the modern dairy environment.”

The three-day event began with learning stations at Airosa Dairy in Pixley, Calif., where the Airosa team and their consultants helped students better understand California dairy conditions and shared details about reproduction, nutrition, cow comfort, milking protocols and other key areas. Back at the Visalia Convention Center, students participated in education seminars and enjoyed a Taste of California dinner.

Day One concluded with the contest and Academy participants receiving in-depth management data from a local dairy. The next day, all students had a short time – only two hours – to visit their assigned dairy and witness dairy operations.

After a question-answer session with the farm owners, the student teams developed recommendations for nutrition, reproduction, milking procedures, animal health, cow comfort, and labor and financial management.

On Day Three, students presented their recommendations to the judging panel, visited with sponsors at the Career and Innovation Fair, and learned through presentations from top-level NAIDC sponsors. These talks were presented by:

- Ryan Camara and Chad Van Hofwegen, Farm Credit West – *“How to Prepare for Your Lender”*
- Cris Hatch – All West/Select Sires – *“Making Your Genetic Investment Work for You”*
- Heather Lee, Genex Cooperative, Inc., and Simon Vander Woude, Vander Woude Dairy – *“New Opportunities in Genetics”*
- Josh Ligan, Cargill – *“The Interview Process from the Interviewer’s Perspective”*
- Christie Underwood, Ph.D., Purina Land O’ Lakes – *“The Growing Dairy Industry in China”*

Eight College Teams Earn Top Awards

At Saturday evening’s banquet, the following contest teams and students were announced as First Place winners, with each student receiving a \$200 scholarship.

- **Cornell University:** Grant Feldpausch, Lauren Hill, Clyde Sammons, Jamie St. Pierre and Dr. Mike Van Amburgh (coach)
- **North Carolina State University:** Melissa Helms, Jared Robbins, Aimee Sink, Amanda Smith and Dr. Steve Washburn (coach)
- **University of Minnesota:** Johanna Knorr, Andrew Krause, Fredrick Mansfield, Lance Sexton and Marcia Endres (coach)
- **Virginia Tech:** Linda Beckett, Whitney Bowman, Daniel Comyn, Mary-Katherine Jones and Dr. Alex White (coach)

Teams and students earning Second Place and \$100 student scholarships include:

- **Kansas State University:** Jocelyn Flowers, Stephanie Geven, Michael Rottinghaus, Audrey Schmitz and Jared Johnson (coach)
- **The Ohio State University:** Angela Evers, Greta Stridsberg, Jacob Triplett, Brittany Webb and Dr. Maurice Eastridge (coach)
- **SUNY Cobleskill:** Megan Hill, Rachael Marsh, Cheryl Staats, Megan Terrell and Kimberly Tarvis (coach)
- **University of Wisconsin-Madison:** Henry Holdorf, Courtney McCourt, Jessica Pralle, Maxwell Shenkenberg and Theodore Halbach (coach)

All Dairy Challenge contest participants received a lifetime membership to Dairy Shrine, compliments of Allflex USA and Lely North America.

Total Industry Effort

Six dairy farms opened up their farms for analysis and in exchange, received a wealth of ideas from students and judges. Host farms for the 2017 Dairy Challenge were:

- **Dairyland Farms,** Tipton, Calif.
- **El Monte Dairy,** Tipton, Calif.
- **Fern Oaks Farm,** Porterville, Calif.
- **Jer-Z-Boyz Ranch,** Pixley, Calif.
- **M.F. Rosa Dairy,** Hanford, Calif.
- **Wreden Ranch,** Hanford, Calif.

“On behalf of all the students and organizers, we sincerely thank the hundreds of individuals and organizations that made this event possible,” said Wright. “We look forward to hosting the national here in the Central Valley again next year, especially with this strong base of support.”

About Dairy Challenge

NAIDC 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 16-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 Visalia, Calif., April 12-14, 2018. Four regional events are held in late fall and winter; details are at www.dairychallenge.org.

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PHOTO NOTES

Print quality versions of all photos – plus photos of all participating university teams are posted in the NAIDC website's Media Gallery at http://www.dairychallenge.org/media_gallery.php.

Additional photos are available upon request. Email rsattazahn@agchoice.com with specific photo requests.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:



2017 NAIDC Full Group Photo

Coming from 37 colleges in 25 states and three provinces, 230 students participated in the three-day Dairy Challenge, held March 3-April 1, in Visalia, Calif.



2017 NAIDC First Place Teams

Caption: Earning first place honors at the 2017 North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge[®] were teams from Cornell University, North Carolina State University, University of Minnesota, and Virginia Tech.

First Row Row (L-R): Jared Robbins, Aimee Sink, Amanda Smith and Melissa Helms (all of NC State); Andrew Krause, Fredrick Mansfield, Lance Sexton and Johanna Knorr (all from University of Minnesota).

Second Row Row (L-R): Dr Alex White, Virginia Tech coach; Kas Ingawa, NC State coach; Whitney Bowman, Virginia Tech; Dr. Steve Washburn, NC State coach; Daniel Comyn, Virginia Tech; Linda Beckett and Mary-Katherine Jones from Virginia Tech; Lauren Hill, Clyde Sammons, Jamie St. Pierre and Grant Feldpausch (all from Cornell); Dr. Mike Van Amburgh, Coach at Cornell University; Dr. Marcia Endres, Coach at University of Minnesota.



2017 NAIDC – Career Fair

Caption: Representatives from agribusinesses that support Dairy Challenge visit with students about career opportunities and industry product and service innovations.



2017 NAIDC - Data Review

Caption: Dairy Challenge students, like this pair from University of Florida, take a deep dive into the herd management and finance records that are provided by the dairy they are assigned to evaluate and develop recommendations for continuous improvement.



2017 NAIDC – Dairy Inspection

Caption: During Dairy Challenge, students have a relatively short time on the dairy – about two hours – to understand current operating procedures, assess strengths and gather clues about opportunities for improvement.



2017 NAIDC - Calf Management Review

Caption: Dairy Challenge Academy participants explore the calf raising area to evaluate nutrition, health, comfort and other management areas.