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Contact: Amy te Plate-Church, NAIDC Publicity Committee
715-304-7031 or amyteplate@crinet.com

128 Students, 32 Colleges Participate in 11th Annual Dairy Challenge[®]

ROANOKE, VA, March 31, 2012 – Gracious dairy farm hosts and warm, sunny weather welcomed 128 students to southern Virginia for the 11th annual Dairy Challenge[®]. The 2012 contest attracted dairy students from 32 colleges across the United States and Canada, and was hosted by Virginia Tech and North Carolina State University.

This innovative educational program – North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge[®] (NAIDC) – has helped prepare 3500 students for careers in the dairy industry, dairy production and veterinary medicine.

“Students hone their ability to work as a team and improve their time management, critical thinking and public speaking skills through participation in Dairy Challenge,” explained David R. Winston, coordinator of the 2012 contest and Extension Dairy Scientist-Youth at Virginia Tech. “Employers in today's dairy job market seek to hire employees with excellent communication and dairy management skills, and NAIDC is a prime opportunity to advance these skills.”

At Dairy Challenge, each team of four students puts textbook knowledge to the ultimate test – consulting for an actual dairy. In addition to this consulting competition, students have ample networking and educational opportunities.

Saturday's keynote speaker was Matt Lohr, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS). Lohr inspired students with his call-to-action for service and leadership in agriculture. Lohr is a native of Rockingham County, VA, former national FFA vice president, and representative in Virginia's House of Delegates from 2005-2010 before appointment as VDACS Commissioner.

The two-day competition began with a walk-through of an operating dairy, analysis of farm data and question-answer session with farm owners. Then each team developed recommendations for nutrition, reproduction, milking procedures, animal health, housing and financial management. The teams presented their recommendations to owners, while being evaluated by a panel of five judges - dairy producers, veterinarians, farm finance specialists and industry personnel.

Eight College Teams Earn Top Awards

In the 2012 Dairy Challenge, First Place awards were earned by **Cornell University, University of Guelph, The Ohio State University** and **University of Wisconsin-Platteville**. Each first-place team member received a \$200 scholarship.

The team from Cornell consisted of Theodore Christoph, Daniel Durfee, Jordan Fisher and Ariel Garland, coached by Michael Van Amburgh. Members of the Guelph team were Christopher Bartels, Wade Deaken, Robyn Walsh and Mark Wynands, with coach John Walton. The Ohio State team included Kevin Jacque, Melinda Miller, Emily Stayduhar, Kati Stevens and coach Maurice Eastridge. The team from UW-Platteville included Michele Belling, Adam Cook, Kelli Fischer and Adam Kolb, coached by Chuck Steiner.

The following teams and students were awarded Second Place, with each student earning a \$100 scholarship.

- **California Polytechnic State University:** Sal Costilla, David Jones, Tyler Kamper, Jacqueline Van Beek and Coach Stan Henderson
- **Kansas State University:** Austin Pacey, John White, Katie Wooten, Kotie Wooten and Coach Mike Brouk
- **Utah State University:** Karmella Dolecheck, Lacey Herbst, Misha Regouski, Tessa Verburg and Coach Justin Jenson
- **Virginia Tech:** Lindsay Hetrick, Karl Paulson, Chris Potts, Lauryn Singer and Coaches Mark Hanigan and Bob James

Other participating colleges were Alabama A&M University, University of Alberta, Berry College, Clemson University, Delaware Valley College, University of Florida, University of Idaho, University of Illinois, Iowa State University, University of Maine, University of Massachusetts, Michigan State University, University of Minnesota, Morrisville State College, University of New Hampshire, North Carolina State University, Penn State University, Purdue University, South Dakota State University, University of Vermont, Washington State University, Western Kentucky University, University of Wisconsin-Madison and University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

Total Industry Effort

Four dairies opened up every aspect of their farms for analysis by student-teams. In exchange, they received a wealth of ideas to fine-tune management, from the students as well as the judges panel. Host dairies for the 2012 Dairy Challenge were:

- **Hammock Dairy Inc.,** Lindy, Randy, Nathan & Paul Hammock, Chatham, VA
- **Hodges View Farms,** Garrett & Connie Hodges, Dwayne Hodges & Tanya Young, Rocky Mount, VA
- **Hoha Dairy,** Henry, Carolyn & Carter Hopkins, Rocky Mount, VA
- **Jareco Farms, LLC,** James & Jennifer Cook, Penhook, VA

Over 70 representatives from 40 dairy companies and organizations volunteered as contest judges and assistants. NAIDC – with one national and four regional contests – is fully funded through generous support by 125 agribusinesses and dairy producers, and programs are coordinated by a volunteer board of directors.

About Dairy Challenge

NAIDC is an innovative two-day competition for students representing dairy science programs at North American universities. Its mission 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 2013 national contest will be April 4-6 in Fort Wayne, IN, and hosted by Michigan State University, Ohio State University and Purdue University. Four regional contests will be held in late fall 2012 and winter 2013; details are at www.dairychallenge.org/calendar_news.php.

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