

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Students Participate in Seventh Annual Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge**

More than 120 students from 11 northeast colleges and two Canadian universities participated in the seventh annual Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge in Glens Falls, New York. Host coordinator, Dayton Maxwell, and colleagues from the State University of New York at Cobleskill welcomed students from Alfred State College, Cornell University, Delaware Valley College, Morrisville State College, The Pennsylvania State University, SUNY Cobleskill, University of Maine, University of Maryland, University of New Hampshire, University of Vermont, Vermont Technical College, University of Guelph from Ontario, Canada, and McGill University from Quebec, Canada.

The Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge is an innovative three-day event designed by a team of industry and university professionals to promote a vibrant future for the dairy industry. Working in mixed-university teams of four or five students, contestants assessed all aspects of a working dairy farm and presented recommendations for improvement to a panel of judges and participating farm families.

The objective of this evaluation process is to create a real-life situation that stresses the importance of teamwork and professionalism. Contest superintendent Jenny Mills of Elanco Animal Health explained, "The dairy industry requires employees that can work well with all types of personalities. Not only does the Dairy Challenge teach technical knowledge, it excels in assisting students in developing people skills."

Students arrived at the Queensbury Hotel in Glens Falls, New York on the afternoon of November 5. After check-in and registration, participants were split into teams named after sponsoring organizations. Teams had the opportunity to get to know each other over pizza, hear remarks from Dr. Mike McCaskey, Dean of the School of Agriculture at SUNY Cobleskill, and then participate in team-building exercises with Jim Henion of Genex and Eric Reid of Old Troy Mills. Through the exercises, students were able to discover the strengths and capabilities of their team, examine ingredients of effective teams, appoint a team leader, and examine personality styles of team members. At the end of the evening, teams received detailed production, financial, nutrition, and reproduction records, and began brainstorming for their farm visit.

The next morning, teams traveled to one of three host farms to evaluate cows, facilities, and management practices. Host farms were Hanehan Family Dairy and Turning Point Dairy of Saratoga Springs and Clear Echo Farm of Schuylerville. After a two-hour farm visit, teams returned to the Queensbury Hotel to analyze their data and develop recommendations for improvement. Each team prepared a 20-minute presentation that detailed their observations and suggestions. On Friday evening, students enjoyed dinner and bowling at Spare Time Bowling.

On the program's final day, each team presented their evaluation and recommendations to a panel of industry judges. Teams were ranked as platinum, gold, or silver based on how well their evaluations matched the judges' evaluations of the dairy operation. All teams also participated in educational workshops at Welcome Stock Farm in Schuylerville, NY and attended an industry fair.

The event concluded with dinner and an awards ceremony. Judges congratulated participants on their outstanding job and shared their recommendations for each farm. Team rankings were:

- **Silver** – Northeast Ag and Feed Alliance, APC, Inc., Select Sire Power, Dairylea Cooperative & DFA Northeast, Northeast Farm Credit Ag Enhancement Program, Pfizer Animal Health, Northeast Dairy Producers Association, and Genex Cooperative, Inc.
- **Gold** – Cargill, Inc., Dairy One, Elanco Animal Health, Alltech, Invervet Schering-Plough Animal Health, Land O'Lakes Purina Feed, New England Jersey Breeders Association, and Balchem
- **Platinum** – Venture Milling, Maryland & Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative, DSM, and Milton Hershey School
- **Don Rogers Platinum** – Farm Credit System Foundation, ABS Global, and First Pioneer Farm Credit. Don Rogers awards are given to the "best of the best," symbolizing Don's commitment to the Dairy Challenge and Dairy Industry.

Alfred State University will host the 2010 Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge. If you have questions about next year's contest, contact Dorothea Fitzsimmons of Alfred State University at FitzsiDD@alfredstate.edu or Jenny Mills of Elanco Animal Health at millsjennyk@lilly.com. To become a sponsor, please contact Jan Bitter of First Pioneer Farm Credit at 800-392-3276 or jan.bitter@firstpioneer.com. All contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Contributing sponsor listings are available on the web site.

The Northeast Regional 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).

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Photo caption 1: Participants, judges and planning committee members of the 2009 Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge.

Photo caption 2: Students evaluate Turning Point Dairy, one of three host farms at the seventh annual Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge.