



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Dayton Maxwell
Northeast NAIDC Publicity Chairperson
Phone: (518) 255-5032
Fax: (518) 255-6025
Email: maxweldt@cobleskill.edu

Annual Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge Hosts 115 Students in Year 4

On October 19-21, 2006, 115 students from 12 Northeast colleges and two Canadian universities participated in the fourth annual Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge held at the Holiday Inn in Waterloo, N.Y. Mike VanAmburgh and colleagues from Cornell University welcomed students from New York, Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Quebec and Ontario. Participating colleges included Penn State University, Morrisville State College, University of New Hampshire, University of Connecticut, Delaware Valley College, University of Maine, SUNY Cobleskill, Cornell University, Alfred State College, University of Massachusetts, Vermont Technical College and University of Vermont. First-time participants were 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 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.

Participating dairy farmer John Knopf of Fa-Ba Farm stated, "It's kind of like having 40 consultants evaluating the farm. I don't mind the scrutiny."

The objective of this evaluation process is to create a real-life situation that stresses the importance of teamwork and professionalism. Contest Chairperson Barry Putnam of Genex Cooperative Inc. reported, "Our business 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 Holiday Inn Hotel in Waterloo, N.Y., on the afternoon of Oct. 19. After check-in and registration, participants were split into mixed-university teams. Teams got to know each other over pizza and then participated in team-building exercises with Jim Henion of Genex. Henion worked with students 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 Wil-O-Crest in Clifton Springs, N.Y.; Fa-Ba in Canandaigua, N.Y.; and Blackbrook in Shortsville, N.Y. After a two-hour farm visit teams returned to the Holiday Inn to analyze their data and develop recommendations for improvement. Each team prepared a 20-minute presentation that detailed their observations and suggestions. At Friday's dinner John Gilbert of Scipio Springs Dairy joined the group. Gilbert discussed his unique dairy system and advised students to have a plan, positive attitude and live by the "Golden Rule." Following Gilbert's talk the Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge committee honored Don Rogers of First Pioneer Farm Credit for pioneering the Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge. After dinner, participants enjoyed basketball and volleyball at the Chiropractic College in Seneca Falls, N.Y.

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.

While teams weren't presenting they traveled to Patterson Farms in Auburn, N.Y. Connie Patterson greeted students and talked with them about the farm's evolution. Students participated in dairy nutrition, calf care, herd health, and nutrient management workshops while visiting this dairy.

The Dairy Challenge ended with dinner and an awards ceremony. Keynote speaker Mike Gerber, CEO of Western New York Farm Credit, congratulated Dairy Challenge participants and challenged them to "think for the future of agriculture." After completing the event SUNY Cobleskill agricultural business student Jim Cooper said, "The challenge gave me a perspective of what I need to do to be successful in the dairy industry."

Team rankings were: **Silver** - Hoard's Dairyman, Monsanto Dairy Business, Northeast Dairy Producers Association, Nutri-Science, Virtus Nutrition, Soy Best, ADM Alliance Nutrition Inc., Pfizer Animal Health; **Gold** - Alltech, West Central Soy Plus, Cargill Animal Nutrition, Diamond V Mills, Agway Foundation Inc., Farm Credit Systems Foundation, Genex Cooperative Inc., Dairy Records Management Systems, Select Sires, Dairy One, Arm & Hammer Animal Nutrition Group; **Platinum** - Renaissance Nutrition, Elanco Animal Health; **Don Rogers Platinum** - ABS Global, Alta-Genetics, Northeast Farm Credit Ag Enhancement. Don Rogers awards are

given to the "best of the best", symbolizing Don's commitment to the Dairy Challenge and Dairy Industry.

The University of New Hampshire will host the next Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge Nov. 8-10, 2007, in Concord, N.H. If you have questions about next year's contest contact Peter Erickson at peter.erickson@unh.edu, or Dan Finnerty of Cargill at dan_finnerty@cargill.com. To become a sponsor 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, call 217-485-3441 or visit www.dairychallenge.org.

####