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Georgia Hosts 18th Annual Dairy Challenge[®]

Tifton, GA, March 30, 2019 – Collegiate dairy students – 240 in total – from 29 different states and Canadian provinces traveled to Georgia for the 18th annual Dairy Challenge.[®] This trip to the Southern Region of the dairy industry was a great chance for students to put to use all they have learned about analyzing dairy farms and learn new things about this unique region for dairy.

Tifton, Georgia, was home base for the 2019 North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge[®] (NAIDC) held March 28th to the 30th, with eight area dairies participating in the educational event. Dairy students from 44 colleges worked to improve their dairy management and communication skills, networked with other students, and explored industry careers.

“Dairy Challenge represents all that is great about the dairy industry, as we see dairy producers, universities and industry professionals all come together to provide these students - the next generation - be prepared to enter the workforce and make great contributions to dairy’s future,” explained Dr. Maurice Eastridge, Professor and Extensions Dairy Specialist at The Ohio State University and NAIDC Board Chairperson.

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 Tifton, two programs ran concurrently – the 18th annual Dairy Challenge contest and the seventh annual Dairy Challenge Academy. The events were coordinated by the NAIDC Board of Directors and the Southern Regional planning committee.

This year’s contest participants included 36 universities, whose four-person teams competed for awards based on the quality of the 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 added another 7 schools to the event, providing interactive training for 96 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 18-year history, Dairy Challenge has helped more than 6,900 students prepare for careers in the dairy industry, dairy production and veterinary medicine.

The three-day event began with learning stations at Pecan Grove Dairy and Grassy Flats Dairy, where students learned from industry experts on cow comfort, milking protocols, feed center management and other key areas. Back at the

University of Georgia – Tifton Convention Center, students enjoyed pecan pie and peach cobbler, as they poured over the in-depth dairy records for their assigned dairy.

Day two began with the on-farm analysis, with all students having just two hours to visit their assigned dairy and witness the dairy's operations. After a question & answer session with the farm owners and advisors, the student teams developed specific recommendations on the areas they thought the dairy should focus on to make the greatest impact on improving their business. These suggestions are accompanied by an economic assessment of their recommendations.

On Day Three, students presented their assessments and conclusions to the judging panel, visited with sponsors at the Career and Innovation Fair, and learned through dairy technology presentations from top Dairy Challenge sponsors. These talks were presented by:

- Melissa Redd, Regional Lending Manager, AgGeorgia Farm Credit – *“More than a Loan, A Relationship”*
- Jorin Ouwinga, Dairy Specialist, Land O'Lakes, Inc. – *“Don't Limit Your Expectations”*
- Josh Hushon, US Dairy Marketing Communications Lead, Cargill – *“Farm Decision Making: Unlocking the Power of Data and Analytics”*
- Kristi Fielder, Director of Production, URUS – *“Inside the Bull Barn: The Other Side of the A.I. Industry”*
- Jack Hippen, North American and EU Sales Director, ST Genetics – *“Preparing for the Real World in Agriculture”*
- Dave Whitlock, Regional Sales Manager Southern Region, Premier Select Sires – *“Don't Strive to Survive Through Change but Rather Thrive with Change.”*

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.

- **California Polytechnic State University:** Hank DeVries, Alexandra Gambonini, Elisabeth Regusci, Elise Regusci, Coached by David Vagnoni
- **Michigan State University:** Monika Dziuba, Lauren Heberling, Ariana Negreiro, Jared Sanderson, Coached by Roger Thompson
- **Texas A&M University:** Haley Hill, John Leibham, Marta Pulfer, William Wolf, Coached by Sushil Paudyal
- **Washington State University:** Olivia Brockhaus, Colton Bunyard, Morgan Hawley, Taylor Wilson, Coached by John Swain

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

- **University of Wisconsin – Madison:** Rachel Gerbitz, Zachary Lensmire, Riley Miller, Danielle Warmka, Coached by Ted Halbach and Dave Combs
- **University of Guelph:** Julie French, Lauren Westerlaken, David Westerveld, Jenna Wight, Coached by Trevor DeVries and Matt Groen
- **Cornell University:** Benjamin Dye, Nolan Feldpausch, Simon Johnson, Christopher Sweeney, Coached by Mike Van Amburgh
- **SUNY Morrisville:** Austin Graham, Janet Hanehan, Kayla Heineman, Katherine Schultes, Coached by Steve Mooney

All Dairy Challenge contest participants received a lifetime membership to Dairy Shrine.

Total Industry Effort

Six dairy farms opened their farms for analysis and in exchange received a wealth of ideas from students and judges. Host farms for the 2019 Dairy Challenge were:

- **Leatherbrook Holsteins LLC**, Americus, GA
- **Barrington Dairy LLC**, Montezuma, GA
- **BrooksCo Dairy LLC**, Quitman, GA
- **Schaapman Holsteins**, Abbeville, GA
- **Highbrighton Dairy**, Montezuma, GA
- **WestBrook Dairy**, Dixie, GA
- **Pecan Grove Dairy**, Baconton, GA
- **Grassy Flats Dairy LLC**, Pavo, GA

“On behalf of all the students and organizers, we sincerely thank the hundreds of individuals and organizations that made this event possible,” said Jillian Bolan, Co-Chair of the event. “We look forward to interacting with these students as they continue onto careers as dairy owners, managers, consultants and the many other support roles that make dairy possible.”

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 18-year national history, Dairy Challenge has helped prepare more than 6,900 students for careers as farm owners and managers, consultants, researchers, veterinarians or other dairy professionals. The next national event will be hosted in Green Bay, Wisconsin on March 26-28, 2020. Four regional events will be 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 to the Dairy Challenge Google Photos album:

Media Photos Link:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/QNUQZNbLn4TAzZPq9>

Team Photos Link:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/dPqNJHNCKhDirj6BA>

Additional photos are available upon request. Email rsmith@omegabalancer.com with specific photo requests.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:



2019 National Dairy Challenge Full Group Photo

Coming from 36 colleges in 29 states and provinces, 240 students participated in the three-day Dairy Challenge, held March 28-30th in Tifton, GA.



1st Place Team from Dairy A – California Polytechnic State University: L to R: Coach David Vagnoni, Elise Regusci, Hank DeVries, Alexandra Gambonini, Elisabeth Regusci



1st Place Team for Dairy B – Michigan State University: L to R Coach Joseph Domerq, Monika Dziuba, Lauren Heberling, Jared Sanderson, Ariana Negreiro, Coach Roger Thompson



1st Place Team for Dairy C – Texas A&M University - L to R Coach Jennifer Spencer, William Wolf, Marta Pulfer, Haley Hill, John Liebham, Coach Shushil Paudyal



1st Place Team for Dairy D – Washington State University: L to R: Coach John Swain, Taylor Wilson, Colton Bunyard, Morgan Hawley, Olivia Brockhaus



2019 National Dairy Challenge – Experiencing Dairying in the South

Caption: Students from 28 different states arrived in Georgia to learn about dairying in the south, including heat abatement strategies and different housing styles.



2019 National Dairy Challenge - Data Review

Caption: Dairy Challenge students 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.



2019 National Dairy Challenge – 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.



2019 National Dairy Challenge – Thanks to Sponsors

Caption: Dairy Challenge would not be possible without the countless hours and dollars donated to make the event happen...including donations of ice cream!