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California Hosts the 22rd Annual National Dairy Challenge Contest

VISALIA, CA., April 4-6, 2024—The 2024 National Dairy Challenge Contest and Academy concluded on Saturday, April 6th, 2024. Dairy-focused college students - 212 in total - traveled to Visalia, California, which was the first visit to a western dairy for many students. Over 37 schools attended, allowing students from across US and Canada to visit one of the three hosting dairy farms in California. Dairy Challenge provides a unique opportunity for students to engage in dairy industry management and communication, while networking with other students and exploring industry careers.

“I always encourage students to embrace the opportunities that Dairy Challenge presents. It is more than a competition, it is a community that fosters innovation, leadership, and a shared commitment to excellence in dairy. Dairy Challenge provides a platform for students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world dairy operations, gaining hands-on experience and networking,” explained Dr. Gail Carpenter, coach of the Iowa State University team and NAIDC Board Member.

The students gathered on Thursday, April 4th to receive data from the farms to evaluate before visiting the farms on Friday, April 5th. Contest students gathered with their teams to review their data, begin collaborating, and prepare for the farm visits. Academy participants from four-year universities or two-year dairy programs were divided into small groups from various schools, and dairy industry volunteers worked as Mentors to coach these Academy participants as they assessed the dairy and developed recommendations.

On the second day, 84 Academy students visited Curtimade Farms accompanied by industry mentors. Students assessed different aspects of each dairy farm including calf care, parlor management, transition pens, and feed management. They also conducted interviews with the producers to gain insights into farm management practices and goals. In the afternoon, students used the data collected during the farm visits and interviews to develop their presentations.

While Academy students were visiting their farm, contest teams from the different schools visited one of two farms, River Ranch Dairy or Flint Dairy. Over 128 students from 32 teams completed on-farm analysis, with just two hours to visit and observe the farm’s operation. After a question-and-answer session with the farm owners and advisors, the student teams developed recommendations for nutrition, reproduction, milking procedures, animal health, cow comfort, and labor and financial management.

This year’s contest included 32 universities, whose four-person teams competed for awards based on the 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 final day of the contest saw judge panels evaluating each team's presentations, which highlighted the strengths and areas of improvement for their respective farms. Additionally, students visited the Career and Innovation Fair and attended top-level technology presentations from NAIDC sponsors. These topics were presented by:

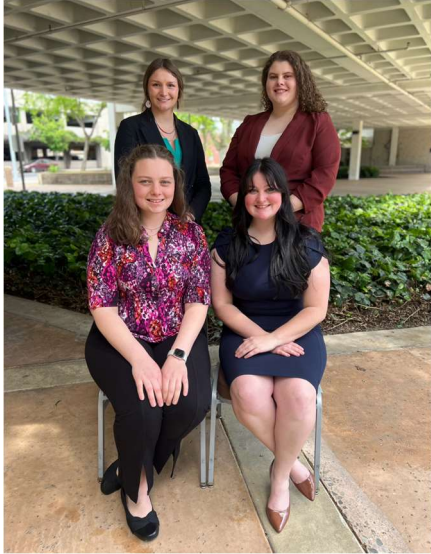
- Matt Groen of Cargill - "Dairy Sustainability, a Multi-Faceted Approach"
- Mitch Hockett of ST Genetics - "Sustainability: Genetics and Technology that Reward Producers and Consumers."
- Tony Parreira and Zachary Barlow of AgWest Farm Credit - "Sustainability: Planning for Tomorrow"
- Ian Johnson of Select Sires - "Low Carbon Technologies"
- Jarett Zonneveld of Alta Genetics - "Breeding Programs of the Future"
- Frank Mitloehner of UC Davis - "Sustainable Livestock, Sustainable Future"

The event concluded with the presentation of student awards, marking the end of the successful 2024 National Dairy Challenge Contest and Academy. The judges awarded the following teams with the first and second place ranking on each farm among the 32 total teams participating.

Dairy A, River Ranch Dairy



First Place: Team Number 5 – Aggregate Team: Delaware Valley University, The Pennsylvania State University, University of New Hampshire, University of Wisconsin-Madison; (Front L-R) Bailey Travers, Ashton Stiles (Back L-R) Brianna Wanek, Kayla Rhinesmith



Second Place: Team Number 1 - University of Minnesota; (Front L-R) Kate Meyer, Dane Haubenschild, (Back L-R) Ben Styer, Isaac Rott



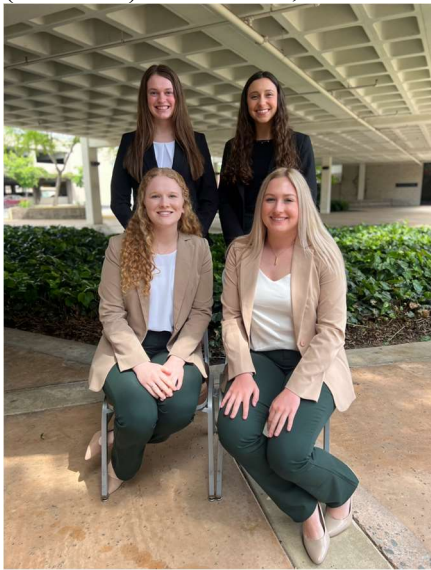
Dairy B, River Ranch Dairy



First Place: Team Number 14 - University of Wisconsin-Madison; (Front L-R) Anastasia McCourt, Melissa Konkel (Back L-R) Nicole Broege, Luke McCullough



Second Place: Team Number 16 - Michigan State University; (Front L-R) Adalee Thelen, Irie Moussiaux (Back L-R) Brianna Hill, Danielle Rummel





First Place: Team Number 21 - University of Wisconsin-River Falls; (Front L-R) Jack Saemrow, Rachel Rynda (Back L-R) Joe Schuh, Eli Jones



Second Place: Team Number 18 - SUNY Cobleskill; (Front L-R) Rachel Ewing, Patrick Bosley (Back L-R) Kyler Meisner, Aydan Low



Dairy D, Flint Dairy



First Place: Team Number 27 - Cornell University; (Front L-R) Danielle Herrick, Rebecca Coombe (Back L-R) Lucas Walley, Lainey Koval



Second Place: Team Number 26 – Aggregate Team: Alfred State College, Cornell University, University of New Hampshire, & University of Wisconsin-Madison; (Front L-R) Veronica Ludwick, Olivia Frink (Back L-R) Zachary Olson, Sophia Woodis





The National Dairy Challenge Contest and Academy is the concluding event of the four regional contests sponsored each year by North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge® (NAIDC). The national contest and regional events - for about 250 dairy collegiates – are funded through generous support by 130 agribusinesses and dairy producers. Dairy Challenge has helped prepare over 10,000 students for careers as dairy owners or managers, consultants, researchers, veterinarians or other dairy professionals.

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 the progress of the dairy industry, by providing education, communication and networking among students, dairy producers, agribusiness and university personnel. The 2025 National Dairy Challenge contest will be held in Gainesville, Florida on April 6-8, 2025; details are at www.dairychallenge.org.

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