

Tips for Improving Efficiency, Economics on Tap at Seventh Annual Great Lakes Regional Dairy Conference

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EAST LANSING, Mich. -- Dairy producers are facing the same challenges that other industries are in today's troubled economy -- they're seeking more economical and efficient ways to do their jobs and figuring out how to do more with less.

The seventh annual Great Lakes Regional Dairy Conference (GLRDC), Feb. 5-7 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel and Conference Center (28th Street) in Grand Rapids, will provide producers with information on topics ranging from managing risk and understanding the roles that conformation, genomics and cow comfort play in a profitable dairy operation to maintaining positive communications and relationships with employees.

In addition, there will be two producer panel discussions. "Practical Genomics: Something for Everyone" will feature Tom Stamp, of Marlette; Dwight "Ike" Hunt, Elsie; and Linda Hodorff, Eden, Wis. Panelists for "Custom Heifer Contract Agreements" will be Boyd Endsley, Endsley Farms, Hastings; Gerry Gernaat, Autumn Vista Dairy, McBain; and Luke Haywood, Sand Creek Dairy, Hastings.

In "Cow Comfort: The Buck Starts Here," Dr. Nigel Cook, clinical assistant professor in farm animal production in the University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Veterinary Medicine, will provide conference attendees with a comprehensive overview of points to consider when designing facilities or establishing management practices. Tom Earleywine, director of nutritional services for Land O'Lakes Animal Milk Products, will share best management practices for raising replacement heifers. Both of these sessions will be featured in a special herdsman's session on the first evening of the conference.

Cook and Earleywine will join other well-known industry speakers, including Jay Waldvogel, Dairy Farmers of America senior vice president of strategy and international development; Dr. Gordon Atkins, dairy practitioner and instructor at the University of Calgary School of Veterinary Medicine; Bennett Cassell, professor of Dairy Science at Virginia Tech; Janice Swanson, Michigan State University (MSU) director of animal welfare; Wes Jamison, animal welfare expert from the University of Florida; and Bernie Ervin, professor emeritus of agricultural economics from The Ohio State University.

Ken Bailey, professor of agricultural economics at Pennsylvania State University, will conclude the general session with "\$16 Milk: Where's the Profit?" Bailey will also headline one of four Friday afternoon workshops, "Managing Your Margins." The other workshops will address manure management issues, including manure storage structures,

methane digesters and carbon credits, and optimizing hoof health. A grazing seminar will run concurrently, with the main session beginning at 10:30 a.m.

Also planned for this year's conference are the popular Partners Program, the fourth annual Great Lakes Commercial Heifer Extravaganza Sale, breed association and youth meetings, and the third annual Michigan Dairy Industry Recognition Night.

The conference is organized by a grass-roots group of Michigan dairy producers, dairy industry representatives and members of the Michigan State University Extension Dairy Team, and sponsored in part by state, regional and national dairy businesses and organizations.

Registration costs vary according to the half-day session(s) selected. Fees range from a half-day rate of \$70 for Thursday and \$50 for Friday (\$35 and \$25 for students, respectively), to full conference rates of \$230 (\$95 for students) when participants register before Jan. 23. After Jan. 23, half-day rates increase to \$105 for Thursday and \$85 for Friday (\$53 and \$50 for students, respectively), and the full conference rate goes to \$265 (\$125 for students). Farm rates (maximum of five people per farm) are also available.

For complete registration and schedule information for the 2009 GLRDC, visit www.glrdc.msu.edu, or call (ANR) Communications Conference Services at 517-353-3175.

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