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Students Participate in Eighth Annual Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge

More than 110 students from 12 northeast colleges and two Canadian universities participated in the eighth annual Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge in Batavia, New York held October 28-30, 2010. Host coordinator, Dorothea Fitzsimmons, and colleagues from the Alfred State College welcomed students from Cornell University, Delaware Valley College, Morrisville State College, The Pennsylvania State University, The Ohio State University – ATI, SUNY Cobleskill, University of Maine, University of Massachusetts, 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, including facilities, nutrition, financials, reproduction, animal health and much more. Students collaborated on a 20-minute team presentation that detailed their observations and suggestions to a panel of judges and participating farm families. Teams were ranked as platinum, gold or silver based on how well their evaluations matched the judges' evaluations of the dairy operation.

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 helping students to develop people skills."

Farms evaluated at the 2010 competition included Reyncrest Farms in Corfu, NY, Friendly Acres in Attica, NY and Hy-Hope Farms in Stafford, NY. All teams also participated in educational workshops at Lamb Farms in Oakfield, NY and attended an industry career fair. Team-building and fun activities were held throughout the weekend, including a casino night where students received prizes that were donated by sponsors.

The event concluded on Saturday, October 30 with dinner and an awards ceremony. Judges congratulated participants on their outstanding job and shared their recommendations for each farm. Teams, which were named after top sponsors of the Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge, were ranked as follows:

- **Platinum** – Holtz-Nelson Dairy Consultants, LLC, Northeast Dairy Producers Association, Adisseo and Northeast Ag and Feed Alliance - Golf

- **Gold** – Blue Seal Richer Feeds, Northeast Area – Dairy Farmers of America, Farm Credit System Foundation, Northeast Ag and Feed Alliance, Nutrition Physiology Co., Inc., Prince Agriproducts, AgChoice Farm Credit, Elanco Animal Health and Woody Hill Farms
- **Silver** – Cargill, Inc., Dairy One, Farm Credit Northeast Ag Enhancement Program, Genex Cooperative, Inc., Northeast Agriculture Education Foundation, Invervet Schering-Plough Animal Health, Land O’Lakes, Novus, Angelwood Holsteins, Renaissance Nutrition and Zinpro Corporation

Morrisville State College will host the 2011 Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge in Watertown, NY. For more information about next year’s contest, please contact Dr. Steve Mooney or Beth Keene of Morrisville State College at mooneycs@morrisville.edu or keenebe@morrisville.edu You may also contact industry chair Cathy Wickswat of Cargill Animal Nutrition at cathy_wickswat@cargill.com.

To become a sponsor, contact Jan Bitter of Farm Credit East at 800-392-3276 or jan.bitter@farmcrediteast.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.

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Photo caption 1: Participants, judges and planning committee members of the 2010 Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge.

Photo caption 2: Students evaluate heifer facilities at Friendly Acres, one of three host farms at the eighth annual Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge.

Photo caption 3: Participants work in mixed-university teams to evaluate the farms and present their findings.

Photo caption 4: A Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge participant quickly writes to capture relevant information to include in her team’s presentation.