

Impact of the Tri-State Dairy Nutrition Conference (2008)

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The success of the Tri-State Dairy Nutrition Conference is demonstrated by attendance (Figure 1) and citation or reprinting of proceedings manuscripts in the scientific, international, and popular press literature. The Conference has resulted in major impacts to the feed industry and dairy producers, and influenced students seeking careers in animal nutrition and the direction of some research programs. The results from the 2008 survey distributed to attendees revealed the following:

- 1) Understanding animal behavior is important in providing for animal well-being. Relative to feeding management, please respond to the following:
 - a. What changes have occurred during the past 5 years to improve facilities to provide a more favorable system for feed provision to dairy cattle? ($n = 57$).
Improved use of TMR and feed mixing, including more groups, effective fiber, improved mixers, vertical mixers, improved bunk management (15); Improved heat abatement, including ventilation and cooling (11); Improved design of feed bunk (e.g. post and rail; correct headlock/neck rail placement and angle J-bunks for heifers) (10); Improved comfort of free stalls (e.g. size, sand bedding, Liberty loop) (10); Increased feed bunk space (8); Reduced stocking density (5); Use and management of bunker silos (decrease variability of forages, reducing water run-off, defacers) (3)
 - b. What two primary factors are limitations to cow comfort in most dairy cattle housing facilities? ($n = 76$).
Free stalls (size, design, bedding shortage, type of bedding, clean) (48); Mitigation of heat stress (20); Overcrowding (20); Feed bunk space (9); Floor surface (7); Availability of investment capital and costs of changes (6); Adequate water availability (3)
 - c. For each pound increase in DM intake that you can help a client to achieve on a group of cows, what amount of response do you expect in milk yield?
Average = 2.2 lb/cow ($n = 141$), Standard Deviation = 0.96, Range = 0.5 to 3.5 lb/cow
2. Heifer management:
 - a. What changes have you observed by farmers or you have recommended in feeding practices to pre-weaned calves in response to the high price for milk replacer? ($n = 65$).
Wean earlier (19); No changes (16); Pasteurize whole and waste milk (11); Switching to whole and/or waste milk feeding (9); Cheaper milk replacers (e.g. for older calves) (8)

Do you recommend that a pasteurizer be used for:
Colostrum: Yes = 34.6%, No = 65.4% ($n = 78$)
Whole Milk: Yes = 80%, No = 20% ($n = 80$)
 - b. What concerns would you have with recommending limit feeding of dairy replacement heifers? ($n = 70$)
Adequate bunk space (15); Management level (ability to manage) (9); Adequate nutrient intake (overfeeding or underfeeding; no straw or edible bedding) (9); Animal welfare (including vocalization, animal behavior, timid calves, neighbor/public perception) (7); Good rate of gain (5); None (4); Impairing mammary development and overall growth and breeding (3)

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- c. Prior to this Conference, were you aware of Acute Bloat Syndrome in calves?
Yes = 65.4%, No = 34.6% (n = 78)
3. Do you think the Cow-Jones Index is an improvement to the milk-feed price ratio?
Yes = 92.1%, No = 7.9% (n = 63)
4. Ration variability:
- Did you get some additional ideas at this Conference on how to help farmers reduce ration variability? Yes = 83.6%, No = 16.4% (n = 67)
 - What single feeding management strategy on the dairy farms you serve if implemented would help to reduce ration variability? (n = 53)
Proper sampling and frequency of moisture testing (esp. rainy days) (11); Premix forages and complete feed concentrates (9); Training employees responsible for feed mixing (7); Managing orts and feed quality (4); Use feed recording technology (3); Harvest high quality, consistent forages (e.g. rapid harvest, uniform cut) (3)
5. What single thing would help improve feed efficiency on most of the farms that you work with? (n = 54)
Improve forage quality (harvesting and ensiling) (13); Improve bunk management (limit orts, clean, fresh feed) (12); Increased milk yield (5); Minimize feed ingredient variation (4); Monitoring DM of feeds (4); Improve consistency in all areas, including ration on paper delivered (4); Increased DM digestibility of forages and starch (4); Improve cow comfort (3)

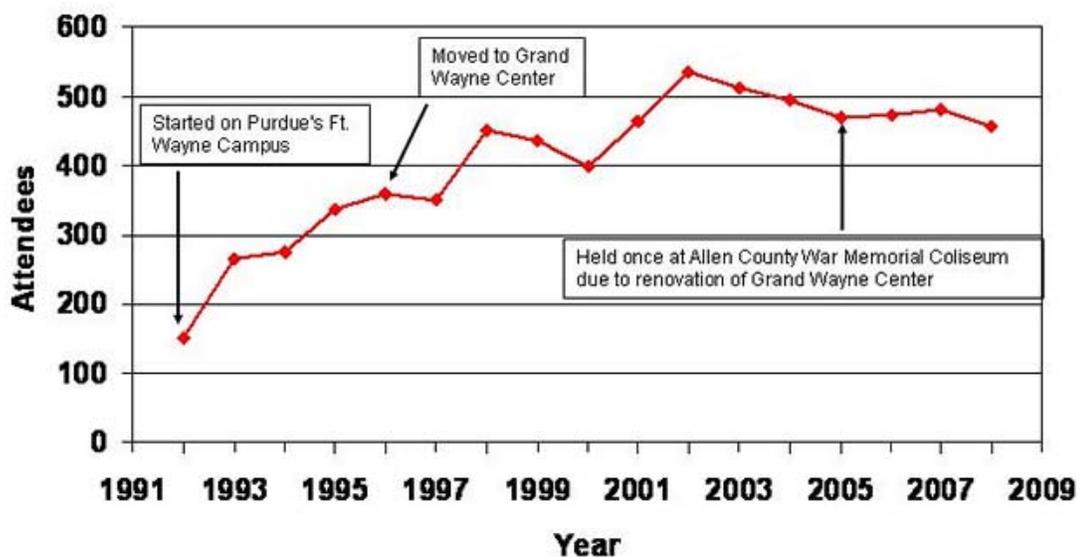


Figure 1. Attendance at the Tri-State Dairy Nutrition Conference.