

University of Alberta Calf Conference

On June 8, 2016, the University of Alberta held their Calf Conference on the U of A south campus at the Dairy Research and Technology Centre (DRTC). The day was a great success with over 240 attendees, with incredible support from Alberta Dairy Producers.



The day started off with tours of the DRTC. Dr. Masahito Oba came dressed for the occasion and facilitated tours while researchers and graduate students were on hand to explain the general management of the barn to attendee's.



The final stop of the tour allowed for graduate students to share some of the research they are working on. Some of the topics included:

- Identifying new, novel fertility traits
- The effect of feeding more milk pre-weaning on glucose metabolism
- How feeding more frequently affects cow behavior and rumen pH

Jan Ziemerink from Foerster Technik talked about considerations for automated feeding including:

- Calf facility design and layout
- Installation and setting considerations for Foerster-Technik feeders to ensure their success
- Feeding plans for calves fed by automated calf feeders

In the afternoon, the formal program began with talks from Dr. Bob James, Dr. James Drackley and Dr. Michael Steele.



Dr. James presented data showing improvements in growth and animal welfare when calves are fed greater levels of milk and housed in groups. A large contributor to the success of automated calf feeding is the programming of the machine and support provided by the dealer/manufacturer to ensure it is working correctly, especially where cleaning and sanitation are concerned.

Dr. Drackley furthered the conversation by diving into the importance of colostrum and early life nutrition on overall growth and performance, including the requirement for water. He noted that water is essential for dry feed intake and is often overlooked. He also discussed the need for feeding starter and when it should be supplied.



Dr. Steele concluded the afternoon by discussing the importance of weaning strategies that don't compromise feed intake or growth when calves are fed higher levels of milk. Should we be concerned with rumen development when feeding more milk? Current evidence suggests not, provided we have step-down weaning strategies that encourage starter intake during the transition from milk to solid feed.



DRECA



The conference coordinators wish to extend their thanks to everyone who attended and made the day a success! The DRTC is always open to tours – either individuals or groups, however, pre-booking is required. Please e-mail drtc@ualberta.ca if you are interested in seeing the facility!

For those who didn't attend, the presentations from the day are available at www.drtc.ualberta.ca under 'Calf Conference'