

2016 Fall Dairy Tour (ISUEO and NEIDF)

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Summary and Implications

The first annual Fall Dairy Tour provided a two day, one-night learning opportunity for producers, industry, and potentially new dairy producers to network and learn more about the industry. These tours showcased farms and industry that have seen success in advancing and utilizing genetics, implementing technology, and facility design for improved herd health and efficiency.

Introduction

On November 10-11, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach and the Northeast Iowa Dairy Foundation partnered to host a 2-day bus tour, visiting Wisconsin dairies and industry. 30 dairy producers, students, extension staff and media from Iowa and Minnesota attended the Fall Dairy Tour.

Materials and Methods

The tour began with a sponsored lunch and tour of Genex Cooperative facilities in Shawano, Wisconsin. Participants were able to view the A.I. collection and processing lab at the Toystory Campus along with a tour of the Stony Hill facilities where nearly 100 bulls are housed.

MilkSource Genetics and Tidy View Dairy in Kaukauna, Wisconsin was the location for the second stop. Tidy View is home to 6,800 cows with a current Rolling Herd Average of 31,514. MilkSource farms have been pace-setters in the use of technology, such as sand recycling and manure separation. As a result of their commitments like these, MilkSource was named Dairy Today's Innovative Dairy Farmer of the Year in 2014. MilkSource Genetics houses the show animals, 50 cows and 75 heifers. Cows from MilkSource have won numerous awards at World Dairy Expo. At the 2016 World Dairy Expo, Musquie Latola Martha-ET went on to be the Supreme Champion.

The tour bus arrived in Little Chute, WI for the evening where participants enjoyed networking opportunities and meal sponsored by Lely.

The second day, the tour group had an opportunity to stop at Wichman Farms located in Appleton, Wisconsin, a fourth-generation dairy farm which has grown to include a freestall barn housing 275 cows milked by four robots. The old barn was converted to a dry cow barn with maternity pens.

The next stop located in Manitowoc, Wisconsin was at the Meadow Brook Dairy. The farm milks 460 cow

including Brown Swiss (24,308 M, 1019F, 863P) and Holsteins (33,038M, 1210F, 1042P). The calf barn utilizes automatic calf feeders, and the herd genomic tests, breeding lower genetic animals to Wagyu beef. The final stop on the tour was near Columbus, Wisconsin at Sassy Cow Creamery. This farmstead dairy operation includes a 250-cow organic herd and a 450-cow traditional herd that supplies all the milk for on farm processing of milk and ice cream.

Results and Discussion

A common comment on the evaluation was the appreciation for diversity of farm stops; from organic to conventional, small to large, robots to parlors, retro-fit to new, and on-farm processing to enhance value added production. These farm tours provided current producers and those interested in dairy farming a wider perspective that dairy farmers can be successful in many ways. Not only did the group see varying production practices, they also learned how each farm works as a team; family, non-family, transferring to next generation, employee management all take work and was showcased by farms visited. The group appreciated ways these farms diversified to be sustainable; dual on-farm processing of organic and conventional milk, cross-breeding to sell Wagyu beef, and genomic testing to sell breeding stock. Overall participants learned, had a chance to network with others in the industry, and took something home they can apply to their own operations!

Acknowledgements

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