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The 2019 WCDS in Review

Source: David Christensen, University of Saskatchewan

The program lived up to the theme. The phrase “knowledge is power” was coined by Francis Bacon an English philosopher and statesman about 1600. He is credited with defining and promoting the Scientific Method. This is defining a research question, collecting relevant facts and drawing fact based conclusions. The five graduate students that presented their research Thursday morning all demonstrated outstanding examples of application of the scientific method. The winning presentation was by Ali Naqvi on mastitis detection in automated milking systems. Jesse Schuster evaluated the economic value of longevity for second place and the presentation on condition of cull dairy cows before slaughter by Jane Stojkov placed third.

The presentation by Timothy Caulfield described how non-sciences is promoted by celebrities and how they use social media to promote things like cryo chambers and detox routines. He concluded his talk with the six things associated with good health. Don't smoke, get exercise, eat real foods, control body weight, avoid risk and get enough sleep.

Al Mussell provided an excellent overview of the implications of the new NAFTA agreement (CUSMA) for the Canadian dairy industry. He showed in some detail the products affected by market access including the 3.9 per cent increase in USA imports under CUSMA, 2 per cent from CETA and 3.25 per cent from CPTPP. At present the fate of Class 7 milk is uncertain, but scheduled to be eliminated after the agreement is signed. However, there may be a new milk class because the new CUSMA will allow export of non-subsidized milk products. Mussell commented that the effective constraint on the Canadian dairy industry may be skim milk powder rather than fat quota.

The theme of the economic importance of milk fat production was continued in the three dairy producer presentations. They defined how they achieved efficiency on their farms. They covered many important issues such as feed, labour, capital costs, mastitis and cow health and current information. However, all three indicated that high fat production was a key economic element.

Gordie Jones made two well attended presentations. The first presentation was on barn design and one of the main points was use of effective ventilation. Arrange to blow air where the cows are and make use of updraft ventilation requiring minimum fan use. His second presentation was on managing and feeding the transition cow and characteristics of the just right Goldilocks diet to encourage dry matter intake.

Greg Penner covered the many options for feeding concentrate at the robot and partial TMT in the feed bunk. He concluded that feeding low to moderate robot concentrate favored meeting the nutritional needs.

Andrea Jones-Bitton is in the Dept of Population Medicine at the U of Guelph and studies mental health in veterinarians and agricultural producers. In one survey she reported that 41 per cent of dairy farmers underwent high stress. Support services benefited only 6 to 60 per cent of these. She concluded that there is a need for further attention and action related to farmer mental health.

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