



**An Update on the
Professional Dairy Heifer Growers Association¹
Denis Turner, Heifer Grower
and PDGHA Board Member
Mission Statement and Goals
Adopted June 1997**

Mission: Heifer growers dedicated to growing high quality dairy replacements.

Goals:

- Provide educational programs and professional development opportunities for the mutual benefit of growers, dairy producers, allied industry, dairy animals, and the environment.
- Provide a communication network for dairy heifer growers, dairy producers, and allied industry.
- Establish business and ethical standards for the dairy heifer growing industry.
- Enhance the profitability of member heifer growers and the dairy industry they serve.

¹ To contact PDHGA for more information, call 877-434-3377, fax 217-398-4119, e-mail brendac@assochq.org, or visit our web page at www.pdhga.org.

EARLY HISTORY²

The concept of a dairy heifer growers association was introduced on a snowy morning in Harrisburg, PA on January 11, 1996 during the NRAES Calves, Heifers, and Dairy Profitability Conference.

During February, 1996, a mini-proposal to form a planning committee comprised of four extension personnel, three industry representatives, and five growers was submitted to Elanco Animal Health and Roche Vitamins. They agreed to co-fund the proposal. As a result of the financial support provided by Elanco and Roche, the following people met in Las Vegas, NV in April 1996 to plan the first steps: Ray Williams, grower, Milton-Freewater, OR; Mark Kibler, grower; Wilcox, AZ; Steve Bechard, grower, Plattsburg, NY; Maynard Moen, grower, Mora, MN; Robert Lewis, grower; Rhonda Franck, Dairy Herd Management; Glenda Borchert, Elanco Animal Health; Fred Nye, Roche Vitamins; Dave Winston, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; Pat Hoffman, University of Wisconsin; Jason Karszes, Cornell Cooperative Extension; and Roger Cady, Washington State University, Puyallup.

The plan that developed was to organize a national heifer conference with two purposes: 1) to bring growers from throughout the US together to develop the framework for an organization and 2) to provide a high quality educational program developed specifically with the heifer grower in mind. The conference was scheduled for mid-April, 1997 for Atlanta, GA. As a result of the tie to Georgia, Dr. Larry Guthrie, Dairy Extension Specialist, University of Georgia, joined the planning committee in June, 1996. Eugene Rodberg of Roche Vitamins was also added to the committee.

The first National Dairy Heifer Growers Conference drew 250 people, over a hundred of which were growers from throughout the US. One day prior to that conference, a facilitated,

organizational development meeting lasting nine hours was held. The purpose of this meeting was to develop some key concepts that could be used to provide the framework of a national dairy heifer grower association. Over 80 growers attended the meeting, which resulted in several key accomplishments:

- Development of an association name (Professional Dairy Heifer Growers Association—PDHGA)
- Development of a mission statement
- A division of the US into representative districts
- The formation of a PDHGA task force charged with the development of an organizational structure

Also, because of the success of the first conference, the planning committee committed to a second conference. The Conference Planning Committee was enhanced with several new members including Mike Brouk, University of Missouri; Denise Mullinax, University of California-Davis Cooperative Extension; Gloria Basse, Pfizer; and growers Richard and Luann Flurry, Alma, WI and Phil Sumner, Leesburg, GA were added to replace Ray Williams, Maynard Moen, and Mark Kibler, who retired to serve on the PDHGA Task Force.

The grower members of the task force have been Ray Williams and Melinda Eden, Milton-Freewater, OR; Maynard Moen; Barbara Drewry-Zimmerman, Plymouth, WI; Susan Blackburn, Batavia, NY; Tim Saber, Chambersburg, PA; Mark Kibler; Eveliene Currier, Brawley, CA; Denis Turner, Hartville, MO; Mark Quinn, Waxahachie, TX; and Don Gardner, Huddleston, VA. Extension advisers have been Dave Winston, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg (replaced by Bob James, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg); Greg Bethard, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces; and Mike Brouk, University of Missouri, Columbia; and the facilitator has been Roger Cady, Washington State University. Glenda Borchert from Elanco Animal Health provided an industry perspective to the task force.

² **The Early History is a synopsis from the PDHGA 1998-99 Membership Directory, written by Roger A. Cady, Extension Dairy Specialist, Washington State University.**

The PDHGA Task Force met monthly and twice in two-day, face-to-face meetings to develop the structure of the PDHGA organization.

In December, 1997 Barbara Drewry-Zimmerman was elected Chair of the PDHGA Task Force, as the growers assumed more and more responsibility for the direction and leadership of that group.

On April 15, 1998, PDHGA members met in Reno, NV to adopt a set of by-laws for PDHGA and to install its first slate of officers. That was the last meeting planned by a consortium of industry representatives, growers, and extension persons; the 1999 conference planning committee reported to the PDHGA Board of Directors.

Growth and support for the PDHGA concept have been expanding. A paid staff has been hired and four successful conferences have been held. Attendance for the 1998 conference increased to 350 people, 40% over the 1997 conference, and more than 100 people had become members of PDHGA.

Recent History

The 1999 PDHGA conference was held in Bloomington, Minnesota, March 26-28. Using a different format from previous meetings, conference planners organized tours to local heifer grower operations where participants saw first hand how heifers were handled in that region. The conference, which also featured a half-day program dedicated to wet-calf growing, represented the first time the newly formed PDHGA took a major leadership role in conference planning and governance. Though Washington State's conference-planning team was in charge, it was their last conference as lead outside help for the heifer growers. Attendance at the conference again grew, and membership of the organization had more than doubled.

The 2000 annual PDHGA convention was held in St. Louis, Missouri, March 23-25 at the Hyatt Regency at Union Station. Nearly 300 registrants were in attendance. Tours were held on the first day for 150 of the participants. Membership again increased, this time by more

than 70% over the previous year's numbers, suggesting PDHGA is still in an early stage of its development. Better communication systems between growers and dairies, such as that provided by the newsletter and a newly developed website should facilitate even greater growth in the coming year. Issues like best management practices, bio-security, records management, contract development, personnel training and management, and assorted other topics will soon be addressed by the organization. The leadership provided by PDHGA will place its membership in the forefront for information which can be used by growers--whether they are separate from producers or herd managers for dairies.

Each convention has produced proceedings which are available for purchase. Topics addressed in this year's proceedings included: "Adding Value to Manure Through Digesters/Separators/Composting" by Daniel J. Meyer, "What are the Real Costs to Dairy Farmers of 'Chevrolet, Buick, or Cadillac Heifers?'" by Marjorie A. Faust, "Issues When Transporting Heifers" by Neal Smith, "Heifer Facilities Management" by Daniel J. Meyer, "Heifer Feeding Guidelines: An Update on Changes in Nutrient Requirements of Growing Heifers" by Jim Linn and Laura Torbert, "Reproduction: Economics of Tools and Technology" by Ray L. Nebel, and "Quality Management in Agribusiness" by Thomas Fuhrmann.

Dr. Roger Cady also spoke about contract development and Dr. Jennifer Garrett addressed the development of a professional image.

Membership

Membership in PDHGA is available to all dairy heifer grower operations, heifer growers, dairy farms, dairy producers, and any other individual person interested in the dairy heifer growing industry. Regular membership, which includes voting privileges, is \$125/year, while associate membership (no voting privileges) is \$84/year. Student memberships are also available to students of primary and secondary institutions, colleges, universities, two-year institutions, community colleges, graduate school, and trade school for \$25/year.

2000 PDHGA Officers

President: Barbara Drewry-Zimmerman, Plymouth, Wisconsin;
Past President: Mark Quinn, Waxahachie, Texas;
First Vice-President: Don Gardner, Huddleston, Virginia;
Second Vice-President: Ron Scherbring, Minnesota City, Minnesota;
Secretary: Roger Imdieke, New London, Minnesota; and
Treasurer: Tom Nelson, Salmon, Idaho.

2000 PDHGA Board Members

NW Regional Director (I): Jim Mohoric, Chehalis, Washington
SW Regional Director (II): Robert Lewis, Windsor, Colorado
NC Regional Director (III): Sharon Niemann, Edgar, Wisconsin
SC Regional Director (IV): Denis Turner, Hartville, Missouri
SE Regional Director (V): Larry Jordan, Lyons, Georgia
NE Regional Director (VI): Dr. Susan Blackburn, Batavia, New York