

Dakota Digest

SD Cattlemen elect officers

The South Dakota Cattlemen's Association recently elected new officers. They include Todd Mortenson, Hayes, president; Bryan Nagel, Springfield, first vice president; Bill Slovek, Philip, second vice president; and Jon VanderPol, Platte, secretary/treasurer.

ND Farmers Union elects officers, presents award

The North Dakota Farmers Union elected Robert Carlson, Glenburn, to a 12th consecutive term as president. Members elected Elwood "Woody" Barth, Solen, vice president. He succeeds Richard Schlosser, Edgeley. Ron and Rita Bloom, Ryder, received the FU's 2008 Farm Family of the Year award.

Kummer elected to USB executive committee

Vanessa Kummer, Colfax, N.D., was elected to a one-year term on the United Soybean Board's executive committee. USB oversees the soybean checkoff. Kummer will be the chairwoman of the communications committee and will serve on the biotech initiative for USB.

SD Corn Growers awards

Several people recently received awards from South Dakota Corn Growers Association. They include:

- State Sen. Tom Hanson, Huron, Legislative Appreciation Award.

- Bob Metz, Browns Valley, Excellence in Agriculture Award for his leadership in developing ethanol and biodiesel. He is a past president of the American Soybean Association and serves on the National Biodiesel Board.

- Jody Heemstra, Watertown, Excellence in Public Outreach. Heemstra is a farm broadcaster for KWAT radio.

- Dallas Tonsager, Washington, D.C., Most Valuable Player Award. President George W. Bush appointed Tonsager, a native of Oldham, to the Farm Credit Administration. Tonsager will serve until 2010.

- Reid Jensen, Burbank, Presidential Recognition Award. Jensen is the current South Dakota Corn Utilization Council president and is former president of SDCGA.

The SDCGA also recognized directors who have served their maximum allowed terms and are retiring from SDCGA or SDCUC. They include Darrin Ihnen, Hurley, president-elect of the National Corn Growers Association; Scott Sperry, Bath; Jake Volkers, Volga; Brent Rames, Menno; and Robert Nelson, Sioux Falls.

Scheibe joins MDA in SD

Roger Scheibe, Brookings, S.D., has joined Midwest Dairy Association in South Dakota as director of industry outreach. Scheibe was most recently with First Bank and Trust. Before that, he was the dairy development director for the South Dakota Department of Agriculture.



EASY ON CALVES: Kevin Kirschenman starts calves in a hoop barn. It reduces weaning stress and calves stay on feed.

Calves thrive in hoops

By LON TONNESON

KEVIN Kirschenman gets weaned calves off to a better start by feeding them in a hoop barn.

Kevin and his brother, Martin, and father, LaVern, put up a 40-by-300-foot hoop barn designed by Hoop Systems LLP, Vermillion, S.D., in December 2006 to receive newly weaned calves.

The Menno, S.D., cattle producers start calves — some as light as 300 pounds — in the hoop barn.

After 60 to 75 days, they move the animals to outside lots for the growing phase. When the calves are 800 to 900 pounds, the Kirschenmans either sell the animals to finishers or retain ownership and have them custom fed.

Fewer sick calves

The hoop barn has made it easier to get calves started on feed and has reduced the number of calves that become ill and need to be re-treated, Kevin says.

For starters, the barn seems to help calm the calves. With a white roof, curtains and an open side, there's plenty of light and fresh air like an outside lot on an ideal day, but the calves can't run up and down a fence line. They are not far from feed or water either. There's no dust, and mostly importantly, they are out of the weather.

"Every season had its bad days," says Kevin. "If you have calves coming in, you have to take them whether it is raining, snowing or hot."

The Kirschenmans vaccinate calves as they come off the trucks or shortly after they arrive on the farm. They also erected a 36-by-60-foot hoop building to house a working chute and sick pens. Calves that become sick later are sorted

Key Points

- A hoop barn helps a South Dakota feeder background calves.
- Receiving facilities reduce calf stress and illness.
- Calves calm down and eat more consistently in the hoop barn.

from their pen mates and are treated a second time.

"Since we began using the hoop barn, we have practically eliminated re-pulls," Kevin says.

Easy to feed

Weaned calves gain well in the hoop barn. Kevin says he's noticed that they don't go off feed when the weather

changes as they do when they are in an outside lot. "Once they start eating well, they consume about the same amount each day. They are easy to feed," he says.

Still standing

The barn has handled the elements well so far. "I was nervous the first few nights when the wind came up," Kevin admits.

But the structure's flexibility — you can see it move slightly in the wind and bend under a load of heavy, wet snow — gives it some extra strength, he says.

Kevin insured the barn, but had to switch carriers to one that covered fabric buildings.

"When we expand again, I wouldn't hesitate to put another one up," he says.

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