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Students in ANS 3250L Dairy Cattle Practicum, after a practicum at the UF\IFAS Dairy Unit in February.

9th Family Day at the Dairy Farm Attracted 750 Visitors

Albert De Vries, Izabella Toledo, Emily Miller-Cushon, Diwakar Vyas, Roney Zimpel

The Department of Animal Sciences held its ninth Family Day at the Dairy Farm on Saturday March 7, 2026. The free event attracted 750 visitors on a beautiful but hot and sunny day. The event, first held in 2012, is an open house for the public to visit the UF Dairy Unit and is designed to be educational for children and adults alike. During the event, visitors could see the dairy farm and

meet and learn about research and dairy farming practices from students, faculty, veterinarians, exhibitors and the UF Dairy Unit staff.

Fourteen stations and activities organized by faculty, staff, and students provided opportunities for visitors to pet calves, make



butter, tour barn facilities, watch cows get milked, learn about nutrition, physiology, health, and how milk is produced, stored, and transported. Visitors also learned how UF/IFAS dairy research, UF Veterinary Services and Extension help dairy farmers sustainably produce quality milk, while keeping their herds comfortable and healthy.

The event was organized by faculty, staff and graduate students of the Department of Animal Sciences, and the staff of the UF Dairy Unit. Volunteers were a big part of the event. It took over 50 volunteers, including undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff, to make this Family Day at the Dairy Farm a success.

The event could not have been organized without the help of our sponsors Florida Dairy Farmers, Gatorland Kubota, the Larson Family, JGMIII Dairy Design Engineers, Hawthorne Creek Creamery, and IFAS.

The next Family Day at the Dairy Farm is planned for early 2027. For more information about Family Day at the Dairy Farm, contact Izabella Toledo at izatol@ufl.edu. Visit the event websites at

<https://www.facebook.com/FamilyDayattheDairyFarm/>
<https://animal.ifas.ufl.edu/events/familydayatthedairyfarm>







2026 Family Day at the Dairy Farm. Photo credits UF/IFAS Photography.

59th Annual Florida Dairy Production Road Show Conference Report

Izabella Toledo

In 2025, the Florida Dairy Production Conference changed its format to a Road Show, became an interstate collaborative conference and got closer to Southeast dairy producers! The traditional conference was held at the UF/IFAS Extension office in Okeechobee, FL on November 12th and at the University of Georgia Tifton Campus Conference Center in Tifton, GA on November 13th.

The conference brought together University of Florida researchers and dairy industry leaders to present and discuss a variety of current relevant topics to an audience of about 65 participants, which included dairy producers, faculty, students and dairy industry partners. The producers present at the meetings represented a large portion of the dairy industry of both Florida and Georgia. Their herds together accounted for over 40,000 cows.

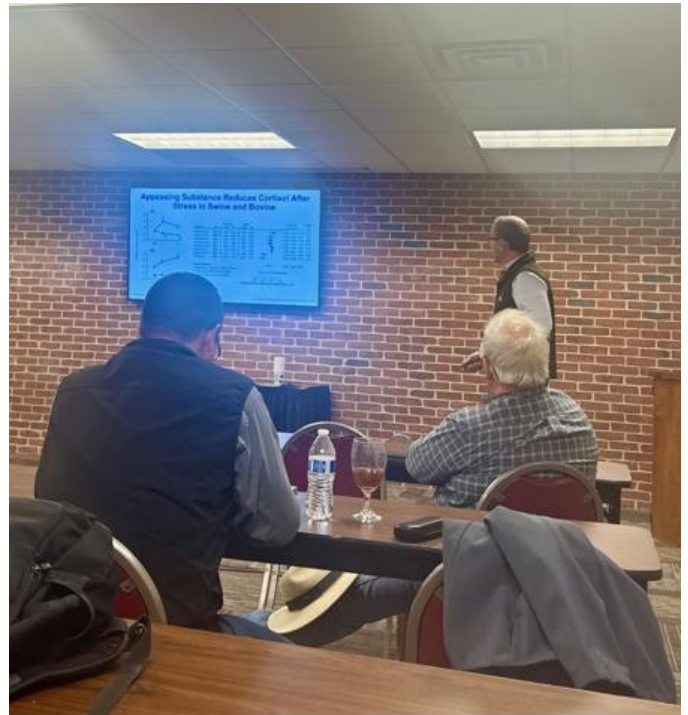
Dr. Mike Hutjens, professor emeritus from the University of Illinois started the



day off with a presentation entitled “Unlocking the secrets of optimal dairy production: A 7-pound milestone”. Dr. Dahl from the University of Florida and Dr. Sha Tao from the University of Georgia presented in Okeechobee and Tifton, respectively, innovative data and new insights focusing on management of cows during late lactation to the early dry period. Dr. Izabella Toledo, also from the University of Florida brought a practical perspective on the commercial application of “smart” technologies to reduce water usage when cooling cows. The conference concluded with a presentation from Dr. Jose Santos, from the University of Florida, on the effects of a maternal bovine appeasing substance on the health and production performance of dairy cows.

During lunch and throughout the afternoon, participants had the opportunity to interact and network with producers, faculty, students, and dairy industry representatives. The organizers thank all the speakers and sponsors: Perdue Animal Nutrition and FERA Diagnostics and Biologicals.

For more information, contact Izabella Toledo (352) 294-6987, izatul@ufl.edu



Dr. Jose Santos presenting at the 59th Annual Florida Dairy Production Road Show Conference.

How Often Are You Evaluating Your Pulsators?

Carlos Niño de Guzmán

Is no secret that maintaining good udder health and milk quality will help bump up our milk check. Less clinical and sub-clinical mastitis incidences and lower SCC bulk tanks may help us prevent milk production losses and reach milk price bonuses. Often, small details that can significantly affect these indicators can get easily overlooked. The pulsators in the milking system are not exempt from this observation.

Maintaining the pulsators well-calibrated and in good working condition can let us achieve those extra bucks in our milk check. Sometimes, identifying malfunctioning pulsators is a challenge. Most of the time, you will need a vacuum gauge to find pulsators that are not working right because of clogged pulsation twin hoses, a damaged diaphragm or piston, or another small issue— unless you have a keen ear and can pick out a bad pulsator just by its sound.

To measure the timing of the pulsator cycle phases, a vacuum gauge is always needed. The NMC recommends paying special attention to the B phase (milking) and the D phase (massage/rest) because they are the most important and are associated with udder health and milk quality. The milking phase should be around 500ms to be the most efficient at harvesting milk during each pulsation cycle, and the massage phase should be at least 200ms to perform the proper massage to the teat end. If the milking phase is over the recommended timing, we are at risk of exposing the teat end to high vacuum levels, potentially causing short-term teat end changes, which often lead to hyperkeratosis. If the massage phase is under the recommended duration, we are at risk of congesting the teat end, which will cause teat canal closure, reducing the milk flow, thus reducing the amount of milk harvested.

As part of our **Southeast Dairy Producers Check-Off** funded project, we are offering state-of-the-art, noncommercial on-farm milking parlor evaluations to help producers identify



Southeast Dairy Producers Check-Off Program

these small inconsistencies in the milking system using a vacuum gauge (VaDia). We have already visited a farm where we were able to identify two deficient pulsators that were changed immediately, and we also recommended to make some other changes that, in the long run, will improve udder health and enhance milk production.

Dairy producers located in the Southeast that are interested in a free parlor evaluation and/or customized trainings should **reach out to**: Carlos Nino De Guzman, ninodeguz.carlos@ufl.edu Izabella Toledo, izatol@ufl.edu, Albert De Vries, devries@ufl.edu or call (352) 392-1981.

Carlos Nino De Guzman is a PhD student in the Department of Animal Sciences. He studies management of milking quality and mastitis in organic and conventional dairy herds.



Carlos Nino De Guzman evaluating a milking parlor.

Are Your CAR Codes in Compliance?

Albert De Vries

Condition Affecting Record (CAR) codes provide information about the cow's record when the dairy participates in the DHI program. When a cow dies or is sold, dairy producers have the option to enter the primary disposal reason, which associates with a CAR code. This disposal reason then becomes part of the cow's official DHI record. DHI records are used by the Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding for the genetic evaluations of the traits Productive Life and Cow Livability. Entering the correct disposal reason therefore matters beyond the farm.

There are 9 standardized CAR codes for when a cow leaves the farm, as is seen in **Figure 1**. Most of these codes point to a health problem as the primary disposal reason, such as Foot and Legs, Mastitis, Disease, or Injury. With any of these health related codes, the cow in question ends her productive life. Code 6, Dairy, is reserved for a cow sold to another dairy producer with the expectation that she continues her productive life on that other farm. The DHI-202 Herd Summary report gives an overview of the cows that left the herd, and their primary reason for disposal, for the last year.

Looking part of the DHI-202 report shown in **Figure 2**, this dairy farm apparently sold 18 cows for reason Dairy the last year. However, all cows had been sold for slaughter in the last several years according to the manager. None had been sold to another dairy farm. Clearly, a mistake was made. What was going on?

It turned out that the disposal codes in the DairyComp software used on this farm (see **Figure 3**) did not match the DHI codes in Figure 1. In fact, only CAR code 6, Died, matched. All other codes did not match. All codes, except code 6, were not in compliance.

The dairy manager knew he had sold 18 cows with disposal reason Low Production, code 2 in the

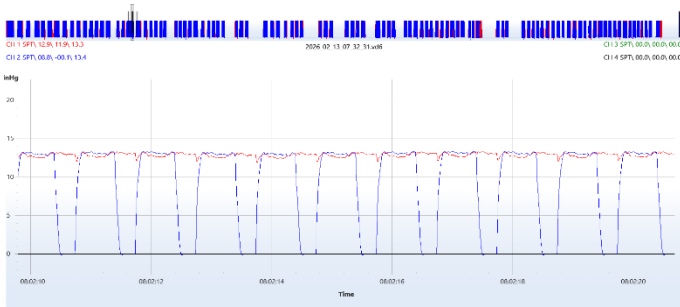
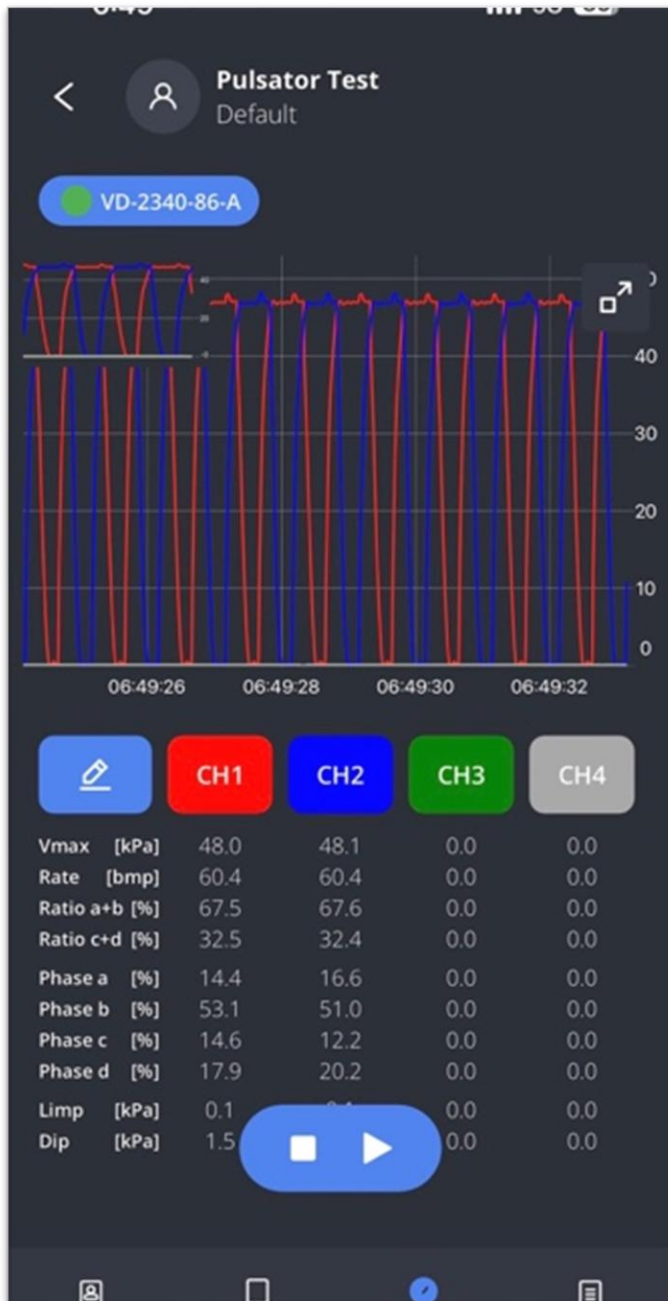


Figure showing the graph from the VaDia Suite Software where we identified a defective pulsator.



Screenshot of the pulsator test using the VaDia devices visualized in real time on a cellphone.

farm's DairyComp, but code 2 represented the reason Dairy in the DHI system. Thus, the DHI system assumed these 18 cows were sold for reason Dairy while in reality these cows were sold for reason Low Production.

The dairy manager did not know why the DairyComp and DHI codes did not match, it was a legacy from previous management. When this problem was discovered, the manager immediately changed the codes in his DairyComp. Now the codes in DairyComp match the official DHI disposal codes again. Consequently, the dairy farm is again contributing the correct disposal codes to DHI and the CDCB genetic evaluation. Are your disposal codes in compliance?

For more information, contact Albert De Vries, devries@ufl.edu

Primary Reason

- 1 Foot/Leg
- 2 Dairy
- 3 Low production
- 4 Reproductive
- 5 Injury/Other
- 6 Died
- 7 Mastitis
- 8 Disease
- 9 Udder
- X Not reported

Figure 1. Standard DHI Condition Affecting Record (CAR) codes for cows that left the farm. Notice CAR code 2 is for disposal with "Dairy", implying that the cow continued her productive life on another dairy farm.

Yearly Summary Of Cows Entered And Left The Herd

Cows Left		Number of Cows Left the Herd									
Num.	%	Dairy	Low Prod	Repro	Mast	Udder	Feet & Legs	Injury Other	Disease	Died	Not Rptd
34	7	6	5	5	1	1				9	7
52	11	3	9	4	3					22	11
88	19	9	10	7	15			1		39	7
174	38	18	24	16	19	1		1		70	25
29		% Left Herd For Involuntary Reasons									

Figure 2. Summary of cows that left the herd, and their recorded primary disposal reasons, as seen on the DHI-202 Herd Summary report.

Entering data for cow 11055
 Last Cow Entered : 11055
 Total Cows Entered : 0

Enter Technician
 Enter disposal code

11/24/25 SOLD Event Date
 MY_D_4503 SOLD Event Remark

2 Sold -- Low production
 1 Sold-dairy
 2 Sold -- Low production
 3 Sold -- Repro
 4 Sold -- Mastitis
 5 Sold -- Udder
 6 Died
 7 Sold -- Feet&Legs
 8 Sold -- Injury
 9 Sold--Disease
 10 Newborn CALF

Figure 3. Primary reasons that were present in the farm's DairyComp software until recently. Note how these codes do not match the codes in Figure 1, except for code 6 reason Died. The dairy farm has changed their DairyComp codes to match the the official DHI codes.