



Northeast Iowa Community-Based Dairy Foundation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NORTHEAST IOWA DAIRY FOUNDATION, PRODUCERS AND NICC STUDENTS

TOUR DAIRY INDUSTRY IN CALIFORNIA

CALMAR—A group of 43 dairy producers participated in a California Dairy Tour organized by the Northeast Iowa Dairy Foundation from March 5-10 to learn more about the state's dairy industry.

The trip offered opportunities for the group to learn more about dairy operations in California, which is currently the number one dairy production state in the U.S. Members of the tour group – who collectively manage 4,834 milk cows in Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois – met with representatives of the Western United Dairymen, toured dairies in Escalon, Oakdale and Hillmar, Calif., and observed the many environmental struggles farmers are facing in the state, particularly with severe drought conditions and water use restrictions.

“The California Dairy Tour is a way for our Dairy Foundation to give back to its membership and offer more opportunities for our dairy producers,” according to Megan Kregel, Iowa's Dairy Center coordinator and the lead organizer of the trip. “We were able to see how the dairy industry is changing in California; particularly in regard to ground going into nut tree production instead of forage production. Farmers must manage their operations so much differently than we do in the Midwest,

particularly because of its diverse environment and water regulations. We tend to get so locked into what we're doing on our farms that it's great to broaden our horizons."

A presentation from Western United Dairywomen started the group's tour on March 5 in Modesto, Calif., with discussions about the myriad environmental issues the state faces, including air quality, ozone regulations that govern emissions from silage piles, climate change, the nutrient management plans the state requires of dairy producers to add cows to their herds, and ground water regulations.

Additional tour stops included the 1,600-cow herd at Wagner Dairy in Escalon; Crossview Dairy, a 1,300-crossbred cow operation in Oakdale; Travaille and Phippen, Inc., who grow, pack and ship California Almonds in Manteca; Clauss Dairy, one of the many Hilmar dairies that between three farms milk 5,000 cows; and finally Hilmar Cheese Plant, the nation's largest single site cheese factory, in Hilmar.

The group also enjoyed a winery tour, a valley floor tour at Yosemite National Park and exploring the sights and sounds of San Francisco.

Eighty percent of those who participated in the California Dairy Tour are active dairy producers and were joined by eight NICC students, as well as industry members.

"Everything went exceptionally well for a trip of this length and group this large," said Joe Gibbs, a dairy producer from Epworth who milks 70 registered cows. "I had a fabulous time. It was a fun, enjoyable trip with a great group of new friends. The Dairy Foundation did a tremendous job of putting this whole event together."

The Northeast Iowa Dairy Foundation is a nonprofit organization developed to address the need to retain young people in rural areas while bolstering the economic impact of dairy farms in northeast Iowa through education. The Foundation, in partnership with Iowa State University, the Midwest Dairy Association and Northeast Iowa Community College, opened the state-of-the-art Iowa's Dairy Center near the NICC Calmar campus in 2000. For more information, visit www.iowadairycenter.com.

Additional photos from the trip are on the Foundation's facebook page at www.facebook.com/neiowadairyfoundation.

To learn more about future activities and events planned for the Northeast Iowa Dairy Foundation, or to become a member, contact Kregel at kregelm@nicc.edu or (563) 534-9957, ext. 107.

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