

**ANNUAL REPORT
DAIRY GOAT INITIATIVE
JANUARY 1, 2007 - DECEMBER 31, 2007**

FOCUS ON GOATS

We spent January and early February preparing for the first state-wide conference on dairy goats. The University of Wisconsin-Madison, Animal Sciences, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, DBIC, and DATCP sponsored the event with support from the Wisconsin Dairy Goat Association, Montchevre, Inc., and others. The conference was held on February 15, 2007 at Deer Valley Lodge, Barneveld. The conference included general sessions and break-out sessions. Almost 300 people attended. Feedback from evaluations showed very strong interest in providing additional conferences and workshops on a wide variety of areas related to both dairy and meat goat production and marketing. One very strong suggestion was not to hold the conference during kidding season.

RESEARCH HERD

A number of producers, processors, DATCP personnel, and others met with University faculty on April 17, 2007 to discuss the potential for establishing a dairy goat research herd within the University system. While there was no commitment to do so, the group was encouraged to continue pushing this project and to look to the wider industry to help support it.

WISCONSIN SCHOOL FOR BEGINNING DAIRY AND LIVESTOCK FARMERS

We were approached by Dick Cates, Director of the Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers, University of Wisconsin-Madison who wanted to incorporate goat farming into the curriculum of that program. This fall, for the first time, participants in the program will have the opportunity to learn about this sector of Wisconsin agriculture. The program offers learning opportunities for new entrants in on-campus classes or through distance learning facilities. Participants also have the opportunity to apprentice on farms to learn more first hand knowledge and skills.

ON FARM FIELD DAYS

On farm field days were held throughout the spring, summer, and fall at the following farms:

May 12—Green County—Gary and Molly Phillips. Speakers were Shawn Quinn, feed specialist, Agri-Services; Dr. Chris Duemler, Brodhead Veterinary Clinic; Matt Lange, DATCP. Over 50 people attended.

June 15—Crawford County—Tony and Barb Gerstner. Speakers were Prof. Dave Kammel, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Charles Fisher, Land O' Lakes; Larry Johnson; Tony Gerstner. Almost 70 people attended.



August 23—Calumet County—Larry and Clara Hedrich. Speakers were Dr. Tom Young, High Cliff Veterinary Service; Monica Streff and Jason O’Leary, Cargill. Almost 60 people attended.



September 6—Rusk County— David and Robin Trott. Speakers were Otto Wiegand, UW-Extension; Judy Moses, Shepherd Spring Farm; Jeanne Meier, DATCP; Robin Trott.



October 10—Dodge County—Gene and Gwen Zimmermann. Speakers were Gene Zimmermann; Dr. Elizabeth Kennedy-Guerts, Randolph Veterinary Clinic; Pierre Meyer, Altec; Brian Kemink, Waupun Feed & Seed; Pete Wallace, Farmers State Bank. Almost 70 people attended.

Hosts developed their own agendas and arranged for speakers. DATCP provided coordination, publicity, information packets, and plastic boots. Montchevre, Inc. and Kolb-Lena plants provided cheese samples.

Plans are to hold on-farm field days in May, June, August, September, and October, 2008.

DISCOVERY SESSIONS

A series of three discovery sessions were held on July 12, July 25, and August 15 in Menomonie, Baraboo, and Chilton, respectively. The sessions brought together a wide variety of participants including producers, processors, veterinarians, community and

economic development, lenders, U-W Extension, and Technical College representatives to share information about the goat industry and brainstorm on ways to improve and support it. The report on the Discovery Sessions can be found at www.wdga.org.

WEBSITE

The Wisconsin Dairy Goat Association (WDGA) and DATCP collaborated to develop a website, www.wdga.org. The WDGA paid to have the design of the webpage done. DATCP provided staff time to post and keep current information on the webpage. It has been a popular site and has links to dozens of other sites where additional information can be obtained.

LIST SERVE

A *list serve* was developed to provide producers and others with the opportunity to share information, ask questions, post items for sale, and make comments about the industry. Over 250 people receive timely information on research, ideas, problems, coming events, etc. on the list serve. Often, a problem or question promotes lively discussion as folks e-mail back and forth. There is no charge for the list serve. To become part of this network, e-mail jeanne.meier@wisconsin.gov. The list serve will migrate to the WDGA website at some point in the future.

PRODUCER NETWORKS

Because goat producers are often isolated and due to lack of readily available information, some producers have established producer networks where producers meet on a regular basis, decide what issues they want to study or learn more about and create a network. This idea is based on the highly successful model of the grazing networks, acknowledging that producers learn best from each other. Networks have been established in South Central Wisconsin and in the Grant/Lafayette area. For more information on the network idea, or to establish a network in your area, contact: dave.wachter@ces.uwex.edu or anne.pfeiffer@wisconsin.gov.

ANNUAL GOAT SEMINAR

This seminar, organized by producers in Southwestern Wisconsin, is held annually at the Richland County Fairgrounds in mid-September. This year marked the 3rd annual session. Completely organized by a group of dedicated producers, the event has drawn hundreds of producers from Wisconsin and surrounding states. Speakers included Dr. Amy Robinson, Dodgeville Large Animal Clinic, a nutritionist from Kent Feeds, and representatives of Montchevre, Inc. and Woolwich, Inc.

FARM TECHNOLOGY DAYS

DATCP sponsored tours of three dairy goat farms during Farm Technology Days in Green County on September 19, 2007. The three farms included Gary and Molly Phillips, Juda; Antony and Laura Jay, Monroe; and Terry and Kathleen Regenold, Brodhead. About 50 people took the tours.



INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON GOATS

Larry Hedrich represented Wisconsin and spoke on the topic, *Wisconsin is Growing!!—industry/government partnership for growth*, at the International Goat Symposium, Lindsay, Ontario. The conference was sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs. Notes on Larry's experience can be found at www.wgda.org.

LENDER CONFERENCE

In October, a number of producers, processors, lenders, and others met in Randolph, Wisconsin to share information about the industry in order to make better decisions about borrowing and lending. Presentations included information on cost of production, business planning, production, facilities, and herd health. Presentations from the lender's conference can be found at: www.wdga.org. Twenty-three people attended.

CASE STUDIES

This project, funded by a Value-added Grant from DATCP, will do an in-depth study of at least 15 farms covering financial data, decision-making, and other factors that go into developing and sustaining the business. The project got off the ground in December and will continue throughout the year. Paul Dietmann, DATCP, Randy Tenpas, Fox Valley Technical College, and Larry Tranel, Iowa State Extension, among others are involved in the project. In addition to tracking financial data to determine current cost of production, the project will gather information on how and why the family got into goat farming, how they solve problems and make decisions, and other non-financial-related issues. A full report will be widely shared once the project is complete.

IN WISCONSIN

A segment covering the dairy goat industry, produced by Andy Soth, Wisconsin Public Television, was shown on the weekly show, *In Wisconsin*, hosted by Patti Lowe, on December 13, 2007. The show featured visits to the dairy goat farms of Gene Zimmermann at Fox Lake and Diana Murphy, Cross Plains. You can watch this feature by going to www.wdga.org.

DACUM

A DACUM (Developing a Curriculum) meeting was held on December 18, 2007 to begin the development of a curriculum on goat production for the Agriculture programs at the various technical colleges around the state. The DACUM process uses “workers” in the field, in this case, goat producers, to define the occupation through a series of facilitated discussions. Once the broad duties, specific tasks, associate tasks and duties, and sequence of tasks is developed, additional areas are to suggest knowledge, skills, attitudes, tools, and equipment necessary to do the tasks. From that information, a curriculum for use in the technical college and elsewhere will be finalized. The goal is to complete the initial development by fall of 2008. The Wisconsin Technical College System led by Jim Gibson, Mark Alden, Vicki Csida, Dan Pahlow, and Jim Begotka is sponsoring this project.

START-UP GUIDE

Volunteer writers have been recruited and have begun writing a guide for beginners in the industry. Initial drafts are due by March 1, 2008, with completion scheduled for June 1, 2008. The guide can be downloaded from the website, www.wdga.org and available in print copy from DATCP at a nominal charge. A second guide for producers considering expansion or value-added options will follow.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES GUIDE

A guide to best management practices for goat farming is being prepared and will be ready for publication soon. Watch for announcement.

RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

We were approached during the year by Dr. Pamela Ruegg, University of Wisconsin-Madison and renowned expert on milk quality, both bovine and caprine, to sponsor on-farm research at a number of dairy goat farms in Wisconsin, emphasizing SCC and milk quality. The Wisconsin Dairy Goat Association agreed to partially fund the research and to search for the additional dollars needed to complete the research. That has been done and the research will take place beginning in June, 2008.