

**REPORT ON**  
**GOAT INDUSTRY DISCOVERY SESSIONS**  
**MENOMONIE, BARABOO, CHILTON,**  
**WISCONSIN**

July 12 and 25 and August 15, 2007



Dairy Goat Initiative  
Value-Added Dairy Initiative  
Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

## Executive Summary

Three discovery sessions designed to explore the developing goat industry in Wisconsin and generate ideas for supporting and expanding the industry, were held on July 12, July 25, and August 15, 2007 in Menomonie, Baraboo, and Chilton, Wisconsin, respectively. The sessions were sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection's Dairy Goat Initiative.

These one-day sessions brought together a total of 39 people from diverse backgrounds and included producers, processors, lenders, educators, veterinarians, and community and economic development resources in each region.

The following report summarizes the presentations and discussion on topics which included milk quality, herd health, financing options and obstacles, supportive resources, marketing, business planning, and processing. While the sessions focused heavily on the dairy goat industry, meat goat issues were also discussed.

Key points discussed during the sessions included: 1) Identification of existing and potential markets for goat products, including cheese, yogurt, fluid milk, soaps and lotions, and meat; 2) Identification of obstacles and challenges to industry growth, including business benchmarks for planning, research, capital, access to credit, and distance from markets; 3) Industry needs including research on herd health issues, breeding, milk components, milk quality, and veterinarian support; 4) Potential for new industry development including related industries such as whey processing, other value-added products, ag-tourism; 5) Community and economic development roles; 6) Broader processing infrastructure.

The information and ideas gleaned from the discovery sessions will be used to assist in developing partnerships, programs, and information support systems to serve the industry. This information will be broadly shared with producers, processors, educators, marketers, veterinarians, lenders, and other support professionals throughout the industry. This entire report will be available on the Wisconsin Dairy Goat Association website: [www.wdga.org](http://www.wdga.org).

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## **Introduction**

Responding to growing interest among farmers and processors in the dairy goat industry, The Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection established its Dairy Goat Initiative in 2005, utilizing funding from USDA for Wisconsin's Value-Added Dairy Initiative (VADI). VADI's comprehensive strategy integrates state government, the university community, the dairy industry and other private partners to focus on reinvigorating the state's dairy industry through such efforts as modernization of dairy farms and increased production of higher valued specialty dairy products

The overarching goal of the Wisconsin Dairy Goat Initiative is to establish a statewide plan to provide information, education, and support of the industry and to include programming by the University of Wisconsin-Extension; research by the University of Wisconsin; curriculum development by the Wisconsin Technical College System; and outreach and education for producers, processors, lenders, veterinarians, and others who work within the industry. A meeting of goat dairy producers, processors, educators, and others held on February 27, 2006, identified a broad range of information, education, research, and supportive services needed in order for the industry to be sustainable and to grow.

Discovery sessions provide an opportunity for participants to learn from each other on a relevant topic and to generate ideas that can be used to expand or enhance a new or existing field. Participants should be from diverse backgrounds to capitalize on broad knowledge and experience within the group and should include practitioners, enthusiasts, and academics, among others.

## **Objectives**

The objective of these regional meetings was to: 1) share information about the goat industry in Wisconsin; 2) identify existing resources that could be tapped to support this emerging and growing industry; (3) discuss ideas for creating additional infrastructure.

First, the sessions would create an opportunity for those already involved in the goat industry to voice needs as well as learn about existing resources they may not have known about.

Secondly, those not currently involved in the goat industry could learn about the industry, and consider how their knowledge and/or services could become part of the supportive network system needed to sustain and grow the industry.

## **Discovery Session One – Menomonie**

The first discovery session was held at the UW-Extension offices in Menomonie, Wisconsin on July 12, 2007. Twelve people attended the one-day session led by Jim Gage of the Dairy Business Innovation Center. A contact list of participants is attached to this report.

The session followed the topic areas identified in advance in consultation with industry representatives and others with industry knowledge. The topic areas included *Financing Options and Capital Access; Promoting Healthy Herds; Business Planning; Milk Quality and Processing; and Marketing.*

### **FINANCING OPTIONS AND CAPITAL ACCESS**

- Rent, lease, or share rather than buying land, facilities, equipment
- Capital includes education, knowledge, experience, connections!
- Knowledge of industry norms is critical
- Keep debt load serviceable
- Get educated on financing

### **PROMOTING HEALTHY HERDS**

- Invest in what will make money—livestock, feed, seed
- Know and watch animals constantly
- Work on prevention—drugs should be the last resort
- Sanitation and cleanliness

### **BUSINESS PLANNING**

- Limited markets for milk
- Kidding is very labor intensive
- Not easy to get into goat farming and make a profit right away
- Put together realistic cash flows

### **MILK QUALITY AND PROCESSING**

- Regulations the same as for cow dairies
- Be aware that organisms can affect milk quality, thus cheese quality
- Milking procedures critical
- Farmsteader plans?
  1. Experience
  2. Licensure
  3. Labor intensive
  4. Competition against the big guys
  5. Labeling issues
  6. Where to market? How?

### **MARKETING**

- Marketing is tough work
- Ethnic markets
- Specialty markets, farmers markets, CSA's, etc.

## **PEARLS GLEANED FROM SESSION ONE:**

- 1. Producing isn't a problem. It's marketing.**
- 2. Fundamental question is, "Why am I doing this?"**
- 3. Avoid herd health problems by knowing and watching animals.**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. Develop a better infrastructure**
  - **Build connections and relationships**
  - **Marketing networks**
  - **Industry norms**
- 2. Expand production knowledge base**
  - **Mentors**
  - **Education programs**
  - **Producer networks**

## **Discovery Session Two – Baraboo**

The second discovery session was held at the County Court House in Baraboo, Wisconsin on July 25, 2007. Eighteen people attended the one-day session led by Anne Pfeiffer, DATCP. A contact list of participants is attached to this report.

The session followed the topic areas identified in advance in consultation with industry representatives and others with industry knowledge. The topic areas included *Community and Economic Development; Financing Options and Capital Access; Promoting Healthy Herds; Business Planning; Milk Quality and Processing; and Marketing.*

### COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Opportunity to capture current trends—farmers markets, ag tourism, organic, buy local, grass-based
- Applications beyond milk and meat—whey plant is example
- Value of ag business located near source of inputs
- Community relationships
- Trends can be big (bio-diesel; ethanol) or small—farmstead
- Business/entrepreneur classes

### FINANCING OPTIONS AND CAPITAL ACCESS

- Commercial, private, government lenders
- Start small and build up
- Sell unused or unneeded assets
- Take on partners
- Network
- Get educated; study the risks

### PROMOTING HEALTHY HERDS

- Establish production goals
- Establish SCC and plate count goals
- Develop herd health program with your veterinarian

- Regular body scoring
- Develop milk letdown sequence
- Ventilation

#### BUSINESS PLANNING

- Profitability and cash flow
- Accurate information
- Preparation to present to lender
- Capture other income streams—cull goats; kids for meat
- Realistic cash flow

#### MILK QUALITY AND PROCESSING

- Cheese makers concerned about solids (that’s what makes cheese)
- Quality demands low SCC and low plate count
- Goat milk requires special handling and must be fresh
- Blended cheeses are like a “gateway drug”—getting the consumer to know complex and subtle flavor differentials
- Options for producers who want to make their own cheeses to work with an existing cheese maker

#### MARKETING

- Capturing a broader market to grow the industry
- Need more marketing dollars
- Better quality milk means quality products for the market
- Continue highlighting the industry

#### **PEARLS GLEANED:**

1. **Don’t push people to produce more. Let the demand push the supply.**
2. **There’s a trend toward small businesses located on farms.**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **Develop better infrastructure**
  - **Build connections and relationships**
  - **Marketing networks**
  - **Industry norms**
2. **Expand production knowledge base**
  - **Research**
  - **Education programs**
  - **Producer networks**

## **DISCOVERY SESSION THREE – CHILTON**

The third discovery session was held at the County Court House in Chilton, Wisconsin on August 15, 2007. Eighteen people attended the one-day session led by Anne Pfeiffer, DATCP. A contact list of participants is attached to this report.

The session followed the topic areas identified in advance in consultation with industry representatives and others with industry knowledge. The topic areas included *Community and Economic Development; Financial Analysis and Finding Markets; Promoting Healthy Herds; Business Planning; Milk Quality and Processing; and Marketing.*

#### COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Locally produced food more and more important
- Producer/consumer connections
- Rural businesses tend to be small or micro-enterprises
- Entrepreneurship and small businesses are backbone of regional economy
- Keep dollars local

#### FINANCIAL ANALYSIS AND FINDING MARKETS

- Get educated before you borrow
- Find and verify markets
- Capitalize on cultural changes—niche markets
- Build a marketing plan

#### PROMOTING HEALTHY HERDS

- Need drug dosages for goats—research not done
- Know your animals
- Develop herd health program with your veterinarian
- Prevention is key
- Important to set goals—production; SCC, etc
- Concentrate on nutrition

#### BUSINESS PLANNING

- Profitability and cash flow
- Accurate information
- Plan and know how to explain it
- Other income streams

#### MILK QUALITY AND PROCESSING

- Incentives for high quality milk
- Pay price based on components
- Raise component value by constant attention to herd health, nutrition, DHI testing
- Goal of 750,000 SCC and plate count under 10 at all times
- Goal to add a cheese plant in northeast Wisconsin

#### MARKETING

- Capturing broader market to grow the industry
- Explore marketing partnerships
- Need marketing funding

#### **PEARLS GLEANED:**

- 1. Volume is not the goal (quality is).**
- 2. Become visible! (Invite consumers to your farm; flyers; sampling, etc)**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. Market development**
  - **Developing marketing plan/connections**

- **Marketing networks**
  - **Local growth—host an event; develop fact sheets; share advertising; farm visits; press releases; ag-tourism, etc.**
- 2. Expand production knowledge base**
- **Grass based production**
  - **Low cost preventive techniques**
  - **Producer networks**

## **Summary**

The strong interest and enthusiasm of the participants, the interchange of ideas, and recommendations obtained from the three discovery sessions around the state demonstrate that discovery participants expect the goat industry to grow and to flourish in Wisconsin.

A review of the ideas that came out of the discovery sessions, shows that there is much to be done to grow, strengthen, and enhance the industry from production through marketing to the consumer's table. That work will need to be addressed by producers, veterinarians, the University, Cooperative Extension, the Technical College System, lenders, economic and community developers, processors, marketers, and others.

While it would be presumptuous to assign work to the resources listed above, areas that naturally fit their missions might look like the attached flow chart.

The Dairy Goat Initiative (DATCP) will utilize this information in 2008 to enlist the collaboration and support of current and additional partners to develop a strong supportive program to serve the industry.

December, 2007



## DISCOVERY SESSION RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

### **Session One: Menomonie**

#### PEARLS GLEANED FROM SESSION ONE:

1. Producing isn't a problem. It's marketing.
2. Fundamental question is, "Why am I doing this?"
3. Avoid herd health problems by knowing and watching animals.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Develop a better infrastructure
  - Build connections and relationships
  - Marketing networks
  - Industry norms
2. Expand production knowledge base
  - Mentors
  - Education programs
  - Producer networks

### **Session Two: Baraboo**

#### PEARLS GLEANED:

1. Don't push people to produce more. Let the demand push the supply.
2. There's a trend toward small businesses located on farms.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Develop better infrastructure
  - Build connections and relationships
  - Marketing networks
  - Industry norms
2. Expand production knowledge base
  - Research
  - Education programs
  - Producer networks

### **Session Three: Chilton**

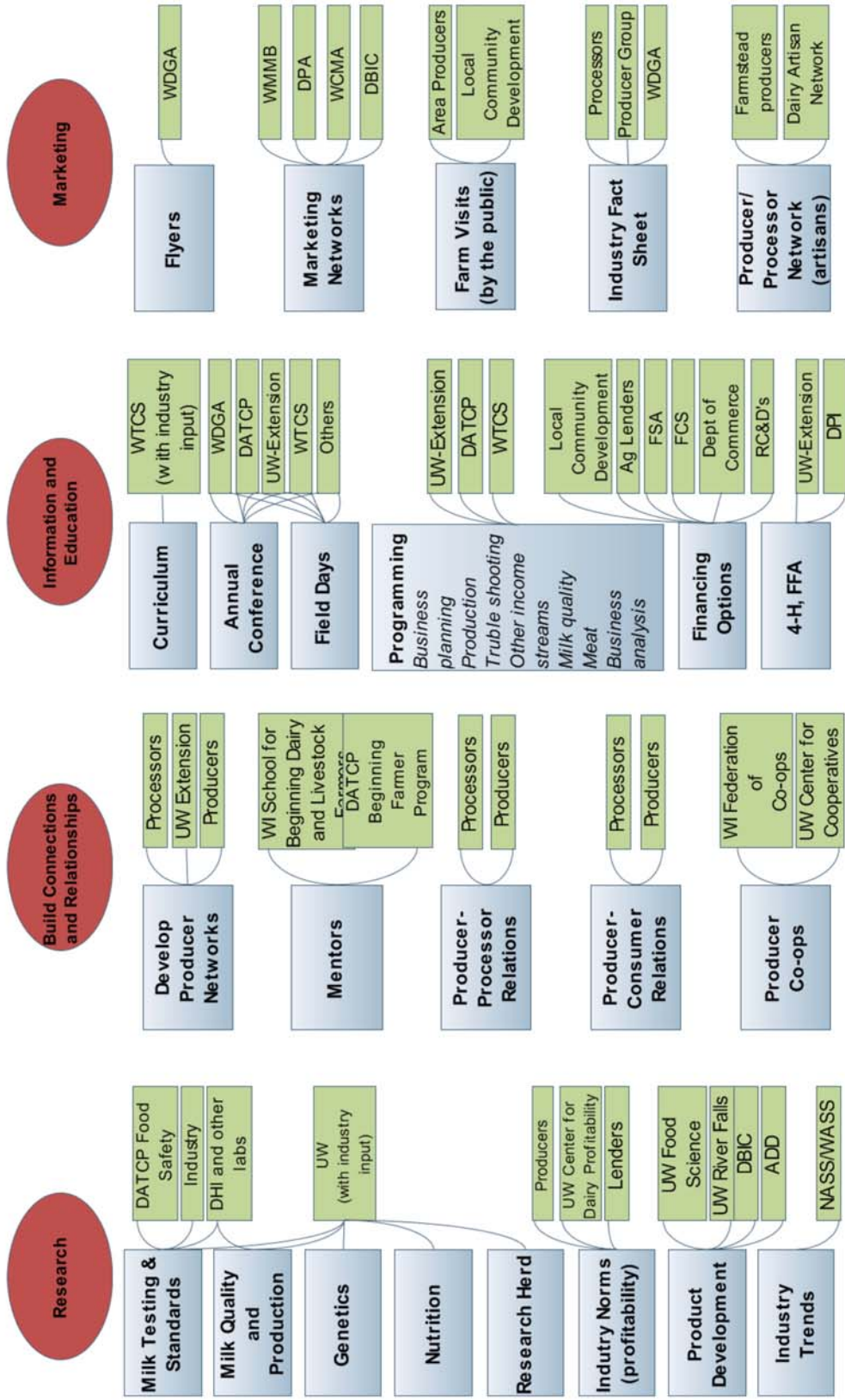
#### PEARLS GLEANED:

1. Volume is not the goal (quality is).
2. Become visible! (Invite consumers to your farm; flyers; sampling, etc)

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Market development
  - Developing marketing plan/connections
  - Marketing networks
  - Local growth—host an event; develop fact sheets; share advertising; farm visits; press releases; ag-tourism, etc.
2. Expand production knowledge base
  - Grass based production
  - Low cost preventive techniques
  - Producer networks

# Wisconsin Goat Industry Needs and Proposed Agency Involvement



## **Summary**

### **Session One: Menomonie**

#### PEARLS GLEANED FROM SESSION ONE:

4. Producing isn't a problem. It's marketing.
5. Fundamental question is, "Why am I doing this?"
6. Avoid herd health problems by knowing and watching animals.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

3. Develop a better infrastructure
  - Build connections and relationships
  - Marketing networks
  - Industry norms
4. Expand production knowledge base
  - Mentors
  - Education programs
  - Producer networks

### **Session Two: Baraboo**

#### PEARLS GLEANED:

3. Don't push people to produce more. Let the demand push the supply.
4. There's a trend toward small businesses located on farms.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

3. Develop better infrastructure
  - Build connections and relationships
  - Marketing networks
  - Industry norms
4. Expand production knowledge base
  - Research
  - Education programs
  - Producer networks

### **Session Three: Chilton**

#### PEARLS GLEANED:

3. Volume is not the goal (quality is).
4. Become visible! (Invite consumers to your farm; flyers; sampling, etc)

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

3. Market development
  - Developing marketing plan/connections
  - Marketing networks
  - Local growth—host an event; develop fact sheets; share advertising; farm visits; press releases; ag-tourism, etc.
4. Expand production knowledge base
  - Grass based production
  - Low cost preventive techniques
  - Producer networks

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