

# IOWA STATE DAIRY ASSOCIATION TEAMS UP WITH ISU EXTENSION

By Willy Klein

SEVERAL TIMES EVERY DAY MORE THAN 200,000 DAIRY cows step into stalls on Iowa's 1,900 dairy farms to be milked. This seven-days-a-week chore supports 26,000 jobs and contributes \$1.5 billion annually to Iowa's economy. Daily demands on dairy producers and processors leave little time for one-on-one visits with legislators or consumers, even though they realize the importance of good communications with these groups.

To speak for them, producers depend on the Iowa State Dairy Association (ISDA), with connections to Iowa State University Extension and regional dairy associations.

The producer-driven association got its start when chartered by the Iowa Legislature in 1876 to address breeding, feeding, disease and products. A 2001 organization restructuring created the executive secretary position to serve as the organization's voice; today, Jessica Bloomberg is that voice.

"I work closely with the board of directors who represent the membership. Together we review policies and issues that affect the dairy industry," says Bloomberg. "I am building networks through the ex-officio board members with Iowa State University researchers and faculty and within the dairy industry."

Bloomberg says her Iowa State contacts provide reliable science-based information that she shares with decision-makers in support of the producers' stand on policy issues. She also finds the network of university educational research and resources to be great references for producers and consumers.

Wayne Dykshorn, ISDA board president from Sioux Center, depends on Bloomberg for legislative session updates. "There are many legislative issues that impact our industry – food safety, immigrant workers and animal welfare. As a board we rely on Iowa State to keep the association updated on current research so we make informed decisions on issues before the legislature. Then we depend on Jessica to represent the board in communications with legislators."

ISDA holds coalition meetings to review local concerns, proposed policies, national and state issues and to identify hot topics to focus organizational efforts. Leo Timms, ISU Extension dairy specialist and professor of animal science, represents Iowa State on the coalition; Kurt Wierda ('94

agricultural studies) and Jed Becker ('76 farm operations), dairy producers, represent the Western Iowa Dairy Alliance and Northeast Iowa Dairy Foundation, respectively. They say that regional association and Iowa State representation on the coalition is important to sustaining the ISDA mission.

"ISDA is a clearing house of information," says Timms. "It's like a big dairy circle; at the hub are all the important issues. ISDA is the conduit of information to and from processors and producers, legislators, ISU, consumers and environmental groups."

Becker appreciates ISDA bringing ISU research to Capitol Hill.

"Most legislators have little dairy or farm background, yet they must make policy decisions that affect the dairy industry, Becker says. "It is important to have a collective voice express the producer view, and just as important that decision makers have access to ISU research that gives credence to that perspective. ISDA provides both." ©



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Extension specialist Leo Timms (right) discusses dairy education for youth with Jessica Bloomberg, Iowa State Dairy Association; Jed Becker (left), Northeast Dairy Foundation; and Wayne Dykshorn, Iowa State Dairy Association and the Western Iowa Dairy Alliance.