

Jim Lewis

Following his successful career as the 1977 MN State High School bull riding champion, Jim Lewis attended UW-River Falls. In June of 1978 he was asked to accompany "Memory" on her march for milk throughout the Midwest promoting dairy farmers contribution to our food supply. He was required to milk, feed and present Memory daily in every state from MN to the Mexican Border and back for 30 days, a remarkable feat for a 19 year-old kid. Following that he began a 3 year stint with Pinehurst Farms in Sheboygan Falls WI, where he was a part of the team caring for one of the finest herds of Registered Holsteins in history. Each year the Pinehurst show string traveled more than 9000 miles with Jim's cow skills imperative to their overwhelming success.

Jim and his wife Jill started their career in the dairy industry in 1981 with 28 cows in a traditional tie stall barn in southern Minnesota. Jim and Jill were among the first to adopt new computer technology and the Dairy Champ software available through the U of M. Over the years they gradually increased in size to 1100 cows in NW Minnesota, having two children along the way. They were innovators with curtained side walls, ventilation, cow cooling, computerized parlor performance monitoring, and feed management.

In 2001, Jim was recruited by John Vrieze and the College of Veterinary Medicine to become the manager of the Transition Management Facility (TMF), a new 425 cow transition management facility built just north of Baldwin, WI. During the next 10 years, Jim Lewis was a key individual in facilitating the success of the College's clinical teaching, research and continuing education programs that were conducted at the TMF.

In addition to his knowledge and talent as a manager of a large dairy, Jim is a natural teacher; patient, calm, knowledgeable, positive and encouraging. Any veterinary student who attended the TMF clinical rotations will report that they learned just as much about dairy cattle handling and management from Jim Lewis as they did from any of our veterinary faculty.

Although the College's clinical teaching rotation was moved to New Sweden Dairy (St. Peter, MN) in 2009, Jim has continued to support and facilitate ongoing applied research projects and continuing education programs conducted at the TMF since that time.

Jim currently lives in Menomonie, WI and has been employed by Vita Plus Corp., of Madison since 2011. In his role with Vita Plus he continues to take an active role in working with College faculty in our professional student teaching programs and delivery of continuing education programs to promote the dairy industry. He works with progressive dairymen throughout the upper Midwest assisting them with management systems designed to increase profitability. He is active in Pheasants Forever and his Church.

It is no understatement to say that the overwhelming success of the TMF, both as a totally new management concept and as an experiment in Private-Public partnerships to drive the College's teaching, research and continuing education programs, is attributable to Jim Lewis.