

## John Vrieze

John Vrieze began farming right out of school in 1974, on his family's century farm outside of Baldwin, WI. At that time he increased the commercial herd from 28 cows to an all registered herd of 60 cows. From 1980 to 1997 he was active in the exporting of embryos and bulls to foreign countries and then in 1997 Baldwin Dairy was built for 450 cows. A year later he expanded the Baldwin dairy herd to 1,025 cows; and in 1999 Emerald Dairy was built that is home to 1,200 cows. In 2001 he entered into an agreement with the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM), University of Minnesota, to build a 425 cow Transition Management Facility (TMF). The birth of the TMF, a totally new management concept, was certainly a major risk for John to be entering into an agreement that let academics get underfoot in his commercial world. In addition to serving as a commercial transition cow management facility, the TMF served for eight years as the CVM's location to provide clinical training in dairy health management to senior veterinary students, and has served a site for conducting a multitude of applied research projects and continuing education programs. Although the College's clinical teaching rotation was moved to New Sweden Dairy (St. Peter, MN) in 2009, John Vrieze continues to support our research and continuing education efforts conducted at the TMF and affiliate dairies.

John Vrieze was the driving force that helped create DBA (Dairy Business Association). DBA is an industry organization of dairy producers, vendors, allied industry partners, and professionals actively working to assure that dairy producers, large and small, remain active in the economy, communities and food chain. He has been proactive in renewable energy and greenhouse gas reductions on his facilities through countless projects including the installation of a methane digester and production of "green" natural gas. In 2009 he built an aquaponic-hydroponic greenhouse to raise fish and green vegetables year-round, using biogas to heat it and using dairy sources for nutrients.

To sum up, John Vrieze is a remarkable visionary and entrepreneur. In addition to his tremendous support of the College's teaching, research and extension activities, he has been an able spokesperson for dairying across the Midwest and a true leader.