



# IOWA DAIRY GOATS: SURVEY SHOWS POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH AND IMPROVEMENT

*SURVEY CONDUCTED IN 2019 PROVIDES AN INFORMATIONAL OVERVIEW FOR PRODUCERS, EDUCATORS AND THE PUBLIC  
BY JENNIFER BENTLEY - EXTENSION DAIRY SPECIALIST - IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY*

**A** recent survey of dairy goat producers in Iowa shows the opportunities and challenges faced by this industry.

Dairy goat production is important to Iowa, ranked third in the nation, with 214 licensed dairy goat herds and 34,000 milking does, according to the United States Department of Agriculture.

“Iowa Dairy Goat Farm Survey - Fall 2019” was the first survey of this

kind to take a look at topics such as milk production and composition, housing and milking facilities, dairy farm management and planning for the future.

The survey was led by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach dairy specialist Jenn Bentley and re-

tired dairy specialist Leo Timms.

Bentley said it’s encouraging to see Iowa’s strong dairy goat position in the nation, and said there still appears to be room for growth. However, as the industry grows, she said the survey also shows some areas where producers face challenges.

Producers indicated that commodity prices, bacteria count and somatic cell count are the top three conditions that have significant



impact and concern on their dairy goat business.

“Milking management and health issues would be a key area of education, given their concerns about conditions that impact their business,” Bentley said.

Record-keeping and understanding cost of production are two other areas that producers would find useful in staying successful in the dairy goat business.

According to the survey, 49% of respondents do not keep production records on individual goats and only 18% of respondents track their cost to produce 100 pounds of milk – the common standard dairy farms use to measure profitability.

The survey was mailed to 215 dairy goat producers in fall 2019, with a response rate of 41.5%. The top five responding counties were Johnson, Ringgold, Clayton, Jefferson and Washington.



Bentley said the results provide a useful understanding of the industry for farmers, extension specialists and the general public.

“This survey can be used to better serve our dairy goat producer audience, knowing what current issues they are facing and plans for the future,” Bentley said.



According to the survey, Iowa’s goat producers plan to continue with herd expansion and facility upgrades. Nearly half of respondents said they plan to expand their herd in the next five years, and more than half, 55% and 56% respectively, plan to update housing for milking does, and milking facilities, within the next 15 years.

For more information about the survey, Bentley can be reached at 563-382-2949, or [jbentley@iastate.edu](mailto:jbentley@iastate.edu). ■