



Rick Waters
B.S. – Agronomy and Dairy Science, 2001; UW-Madison
M.S. – Dairy Science, 2006 UW-Madison
PhD student - Animal Science, in progress; Cornell

“The opportunities to learn and grow professionally within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences are limitless and you are the only limit.”

-Rick Waters

He spends his time helping producers

Rick Waters wants to use his solid educational foundation in agronomy and dairy science that he acquired from UW-Madison to teach the next generation of workers in the dairy industry. He plans to focus his instruction on dairy herd management practices, an area that incorporates a number of agronomy issues related to harvesting and storing forages.

“Forage is a big part of a dairy farm, and my agronomy background has given me a better understanding of what goes on with crops,” Rick says. “It includes everything from seed selection, different ways to impact plant growth such as using inputs like nitrogen and phosphorus, and even the use of genetically modified plants.” He says forage management clearly affects a dairy cow’s feed digestion, which results in higher or lower milk production.

Rick worked for a few years with a company that manufactures and sells milking equipment, before returning to school to pursue a doctorate degree in dairy science. During his years as an undergraduate at UW-Madison, the thought of graduate school never crossed his mind. Now Rick wants to stay in academia as a professor. The shift in his career plan happened while Rick worked as a teaching assistant and he found that he really enjoyed teaching others. In the future, he looks forward to doing his part as a professor to fulfill all three missions of a land-grant university: teaching, extension and research.

Rick also enjoys and benefits from his involvement in professional organizations such as the Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin, the National Mastitis Council, and the American Dairy Science Association. He says meeting and interacting with producers at conferences and events helps keep his research and his career in perspective.

“One thing that I always ask myself at the end of the day is, ‘How can what I’ve done today help the dairy producer?’ If it’s not something I can answer then I really wonder why I did what I did,” he says.