

Harry O. Henderson



Dr. Harry O. Henderson, one of the nation's outstanding dairy scientists and teachers, was involved in agricultural teaching and research for 42 years. A graduate of Pennsylvania State University, he earned his Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota in 1928.

A native of Pennsylvania, he served as County Extension Agent in Crawford County, Pennsylvania, for a short time before coming to West Virginia University as Dairy Extension Specialist in 1919. He served as Extensions Dairy Specialist until 1928. The head of the newly formed WVU Dairy Department requested that Mr. Henderson be transferred from the Extension staff to the Department's resident teaching staff in order to take advantage of his appointed head of the WVU Experimental Farm in 1928.

Anchored by his belief in, and love of, people – as well as animals—Dr. Henderson began the job of improving the Dairy Department, along with the University's dairy herds. Through the years, under his guidance, a “grade” herd of dairy cattle was developed into four purebred herds which were acclaimed among the Agricultural Experiment Stations in the nation. He served as head of the WVU Dairy Department for 29 years before his retirement June 30, 1960.

Dr. Henderson's students learned to appreciate and believe in him as he did to them. As a teacher, he instilled in his students a desire to learn. Many students referred to him as “our father away from home.” He was never too busy to listen to his students, or to help them with their problems.

During his long teaching and research career, Dr. Henderson prepared more than a hundred papers and articles on feeding and management of the dairy herd. He was co-author of a book, “Dairy Cattle Feeding and Management,” which has been reprinted several times and was translated into Spanish for use in Latin American countries.

One of the outstanding educational programs which Dr. Henderson helped start was the annual WVU Dairy Short Course. This was a week's program designed especially to provide the latest information on dairying to the Mountain State's dairy farmers. Through the more than twenty years that it was held, the Short Course was a significant factor in the development of an outstanding educational dairy program in West Virginia.

In recognition of a lifetime of excellent teaching, the American Dairy Science Association awarded Dr. Henderson its Master Teacher Award in 1958. He was one of the founders of the West Virginia Dairy Cattle Show and the Show in 1960 was dedicated to him and his achievements in teaching and research. At the time of his retirement from active teaching, his friends established the H.O. Henderson Student Loan Fund at West Virginia University. Contributions to the fund total well over \$3,000.

Dr. Henderson was an active member of the American Dairy Science Association, a member of the Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity, and affiliated with many state and national dairy and health organizations and academic honoraries. He was a member and elder in the Presbyterian Church and served as secretary-treasurer of the West Virginia Westminister Foundation.