

## How it All Began - The Story of ANIMART



Jim Metz, DVM  
Owner

Being the only one of his siblings who actually **enjoyed ride-alongs on his veterinarian father's route** gave Dr. James Metz his first taste of a passion that would eventually help to change the dairy industry.

When Jim was just ten, his father bought an 80 acre farm in Momence, Illinois, and with it he brought to bear a philosophy of 'put the kids to work'. As a mixed animal veterinarian, not only did his dad travel to clients' farms, but he performed surgeries in the basement, as Jim's mom assisted. So with roots in livestock and veterinary medicine, James Metz headed off to Iowa State University for his Bachelor of Science degree, then spent a year in Europe, traveling and learning to speak French, before finally attending the University of Illinois, and achieving what seemed to be the inevitable; becoming a veterinarian.

While all this was going on, there was a young girl named Ruth growing up on a dairy farm just outside of Waupun, Wisconsin. It was an inherent love of animals that led Ruth to – much to her mother's dismay – drop out of band and become **the very first girl in her school to ever take an Ag class**. Ruth imagined herself someday fueling her passion by finding employment at a zoo. In order to continue her education and get hands-on work with animals after high school, she took a job working at a veterinary practice just fifteen miles down the road in Beaver Dam.



Ruth Metz  
Owner

Once Dr. Metz had received his DVM, the pull of two passions – water and cows – led him to Wisconsin; where he accepted a position at that very same veterinary practice. He found both the community of Beaver Dam – complete with a lake by the same name – and the friendship that ensued with Ruth, to be a good fit. After two and half years, however, the practice itself was not, and there was a mutual parting of ways between Dr. Metz and the other veterinarians. For him it was simple; he wanted to do more.

He stayed in contact with Ruth despite no longer being at the practice where she continued to work. As the two of them grew closer, he would frequently use her as a sounding board for this business plan he had. He wanted to provide his large animal clients with an alternative; to take the guesswork out of getting supplies from the local fleet store without making them pay the unyielding markup that was standard in the veterinary field. To hear Dr. Metz tell it, he wanted to "help the dairy industry become more efficient". An early winter conversation led to a late winter wedding and less than two years later; **in 1982, Dr. James Metz and his wife Ruth founded ANIMART, Inc. By providing customers the unheard-of combination of fair pricing and sound advice, they began to form relationships with farmers that would become the foundation for success.**

Staying ahead of industry changes and offering a wide selection with next-day delivery have all been instrumental in Animart, Inc.'s growth and success over the years, but **it's the human side of the business that has set them apart.**



So what's next? As their company continues to grow, the Metz's say they are proud to have made an impact on the industry and hope to continue to do so through encouraging lifelong learning and integrity in their employees. Of Animart, Inc.'s customers Ruth says, **"We want to continue to deserve to be their chosen provider."** Perhaps one of the most effective ways they are doing this is to let the leaders they've brought on board do just that; lead.

Under the direction of Animart, Inc. President Dan Ellsworth – the company is in process of expanding into Michigan through a recent acquisition. It was the opportunity to share their model that made the expansion feel like a good fit and Ellsworth plans to continue growing the company this way. It's this effective leadership that has helped Dr. Metz and his wife decide that it's time for them to step back and pursue other interests; such as travel and perhaps the greatest adventure of all - family.



Dan Ellsworth  
President

The couple are parents to three sons and grandparents to two little girls and twin boys. As they spend less time running the business they started with over thirty years ago and more time focusing on this next generation, one of their biggest joys comes from sharing their love of water with their grandchildren. Half of what led Dr. Metz to come to Wisconsin in the first place now provides some of the couple's greatest delight.

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