

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Central New York Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops

Quarterly Newsletter

Greetings from the CNYDLFC Team!

Holy Cow! That is all I have to say. Our summer started off hot and dry yet now we are in the midst of a deluge of water. Folks are having difficulty getting hay off and questioning what the quality may be when there actually is a chance. Fingers crossed that we have a drier August without the obscene humidity we have been facing.

Moving into late summer and early fall, the Team has been busy creating new opportunities in hybrid fashion for producers to participate in. Our goal is to have some in-person and some completely online programs for fall. We have already been planning an in-person Corn and Dairy Day at the Otesaga Hotel for Winter of 2022 and a comprehensive Sheep Solar Grazing Summit for Summer of 2022, details forthcoming.

Continue reading the weekly newsletter for up to date statewide information and other programs that may be of interest to you. As always, please reach out to Dave, Erik, Ashley or me if you are in need. Our contact information can be found at the back of this newsletter.

Wishing you all a drier August and a safe harvest!

Nicole

IN THIS ISSUE

PROPER EUTHANASIA
PRACTICES

HEAT STRESS IN SMALL
RUMINANTS

KEEPING YOUR EYES ON THE
PRIZE

THE DAIRY INDUSTRY IS
CHANGING BEFORE OUR EYES

WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN AN
CANNOT SAY ABOUT UNIONS

POISONOUS PLANTS FOR
LIVESTOCK



Proper Euthanasia Practices

By Casey Havelkes, Regional Dairy Specialist, North Country Regional Ag Team

Despite it being a topic and action that is avoided on farms unless absolutely necessary, euthanasia is an important area for producers to have a thorough understanding of. Accidents happen and diseases occur that are sometimes out of our control, but it is the responsibility of the caretaker to ensure that those animals don't experience unnecessary pain and suffering. It's important for farmers to recognize and adhere to their responsibility of ensuring the basic needs of their animals are met. These basic needs include having access to feed and water, protection from the elements and predators, proper medical care is provided when needed, and that they are not suffering from pain and disease. In the unfortunate circumstance that an animal is suffering, it is the caretaker's responsibility to ensure that a 'good death' is provided to that animal.

The American Veterinary Medicine Association defines euthanasia as: "ending the life of an individual animal in a way that minimizes or eliminates pain and distress". As part of the National Dairy FARM Program Version 4.0, each farm is required to have a euthanasia protocol, and those involved in euthanasia practices are required to have annual continuing education on this topic. Below are key considerations for when you are developing your euthanasia protocol, but please have a more in-depth conversation with your herd veterinarian to ensure you are doing the right thing for your animals and your operation. After all, your herd veterinarian is responsible for reviewing your protocols as part of your herd health plan, so this is a great opportunity to discuss with them!

As part of your euthanasia protocol, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- How are employees trained to identify animals that are candidates for euthanasia?
- What criteria are used to determine if an animal should be euthanized?
- What method is used to euthanize the animal?
- How are employees trained to confirm the animal is dead after euthanasia is completed?
- What happens to the carcass of the euthanized animal? How is it handled and disposed of?
- Is the equipment used to euthanize and move the deceased animals cleaned/sanitized afterwards?
- Do you record the reason for euthanasia? Where?

Continued on next page

Proper Euthanasia continued

The first step to ensuring proper euthanasia practices are implemented is to ensure that you've correctly identified situations and/or animals where euthanasia is the best option. According to the American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP), these include:

- “Fracture, trauma or disease of the limbs, hips or spine resulting in immobility or inability to stand
- Disease conditions for which no effective treatment is known (i.e. Johne's disease, lymphoma)
- Diseases that involve a significant threat to human health (i.e. rabies)
- Disease conditions that produce a level of pain and distress that cannot be managed adequately by medical means
- Emaciation and/or debilitation from disease, age or injury resulting in an animal being too compromised to be transported or marketed
- Loss of production and quality of life (advanced age, severe mastitis, etc.)
- Advanced ocular neoplastic conditions (“cancer eye”)
- Disease conditions for which treatment is cost-prohibitive
- Extended drug withdrawal time for clearance of tissue residue
- Poor prognosis or prolonged expected recovery” (AABP, 2019)

Once an animal is identified as a candidate for euthanasia, the farm must decide what the best method of euthanasia is for their situation. Human safety, animal safety and welfare, practicality, skill, and cost are amongst some of the factors to consider when deciding upon the method euthanasia. According to the AVMA, there are three acceptable methods of on-farm euthanasia:

1. IV administration of a lethal dose of barbiturate (with the help of your vet)
2. Gunshot (placement is very important)
3. Penetrating captive bolt (for mature animals) followed by an additional step (placement is very important)

All of these methods require training and should involve insight from your herd veterinarian. For more information on each of the methods listed above, please refer the AABP document referenced throughout this article or the AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals. These documents will provide further details on correct gun placement and distance, bullet choice, proper drug administration, and much more. As part of your continuing education on this subject, be sure to check these resources periodically as the technique or exactly placement guidance may have been updated.

Continued on next page

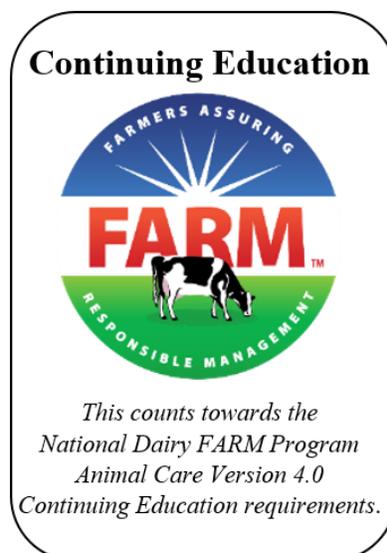
Proper Euthanasia continued

Once the method of euthanasia is decided upon and the act of euthanizing the animal is complete, the individual trained in this area must be able to confirm the animal is dead. The trained individual should safely confirm the lack of a heartbeat, and lack of respirations for 3-5 minutes. The AABP further recommends that it is good practice to monitor the animal for an additional 20 to 30 minutes to ensure that the animal is dead and not just unconscious. Additional signs to look for include lack of eye reflexes, graying of the mucous membranes, and rigor mortis.

Once the animal is confirmed dead, the farm should have a plan for where the animal's carcass will be disposed and how the carcass will be handled. If barbiturates are used, use care with carcass disposal as drug residues may be an issue. It is important to make sure that the equipment used for euthanizing animals is well cared for, and cleaned/sanitized properly between animals. This is especially important when using intravenous methods. The AABP also recommends that a gun cleaning, captive bolt cleaning, and service log records are also kept when using these methods of euthanasia.

Lastly, the FARM program requires accurate and complete records of euthanasia. This record should be kept in safe place that can be easily accessed. Since you already have to keep protocol records to be in compliance with FARM 4.0, we recommend keeping it in the same binder with your other protocols. This record should include at minimum the following details: the animal ID, the person performing euthanasia, the reason for euthanasia, the method of euthanasia, and the method of carcass disposal.

Euthanasia is never a fun topic to discuss, but it is extremely important that your farm has taken the necessary steps to ensure that animals are euthanized in a timely fashion using the absolute best practices. Please remember that ALL individuals responsible for carrying out euthanasia practices must be trained and participate in continuing education, and that proper care must be taken when operating firearms.



Heat Stress in Small Ruminants

by Susan Schoenian, Sheep & Goat Specialist, University of Maryland Small Ruminant Extension Program

Over the past weekend, my family and I spent some time installing a new water line to give us access to more grazing area. As we spent most of both days in the sun, I began to work on 2021's farmers tan. As I write this up, my arms are still feeling the heat of the weekend. With this being said, I thought that it would be timely to talk about heat stress in our favorite livestock species, sheep and goats. Any time we talk about feeding livestock, we note the importance of fresh, clean water. This is always a given regardless of the time of year. There is also discussion about wool on sheep during the summer months. Wool is actually quite beneficial when it comes to protecting against the hot summer sun. For more on these two topics and others related to heat stress, be sure to check out this weeks discussion provided by Susan Schoenian. - Ashley McFarland

Extreme heat is stressful to livestock, as well as people. High temperatures are even more problematic in states like Maryland, because high temperatures are also often accompanied by high humidity. The heat index (temperature + humidity) is a more accurate measure of heat stress (hyperthermia) than temperature alone.

Heat tolerance

Some livestock (and people) tolerate heat better than others. Sheep and goats tend to be less susceptible to heat stress than swine, cattle, llamas, and alpacas. Hair sheep usually tolerate heat better than wooled sheep. This is why they are often used for training and trialing herding dogs. Fat-tailed sheep are also more heat tolerant. The European sheep breeds are usually the least heat-adaptive because they tend to have shorter bodies and legs, short, thick ears, tight skin, and dense fleeces.

Goats tend to tolerate heat better than sheep. Goats with loose skin and floppy ears may be more heat tolerant than other goats. Angora goats have a decreased ability to respond to heat stress as compared to sheep and other breeds of goats. Dark-colored animals are more susceptible to heat stress, while light-colored animals may be prone to sunburn. Females usually handle heat better than males. The heat is especially hard on fat animals.

Horned animals dissipate heat better than polled (or disbudded) animals. Young animals are more susceptible to heat stress than older animals, though the geriatric animal is also very vulnerable. In fact, any animal with a poor nutritional status or compromised immunity will be more susceptible to environmental extremes.

Wool

Wool protects sheep from extreme heat as well as extreme cold. A thick fleece is mostly immune to temperature changes due to its insulating properties. According to research, sheep with a one-inch fleece are more comfortable than sheep with less wool, as wool fibers dissipate heat more rapidly.

However, woolly animals should be sheared prior to the onset of hot weather. Spring shearing allows sheep to have adequate wool growth to keep them cool in the summer (and avoid sunburning) and a full wool coat in the winter to keep them warm. Sheep and goats should not be sheared in extreme heat. Shearing lambs will improve their growth performance (and welfare) during the summer months, if temperatures and humidity are elevated.



Continued on next page

Water

Plenty of clean, cool, and fresh water is paramount to preventing heat stress in livestock. During periods of extended heat and humidity, it may be necessary to provide extra water and clean and change waterers more often. On-average, a sheep or goat will drink 1-2 gallons of water per day. Lactating females will drink even more water.

A study conducted with 3-year old ewes showed that consumption of water is 9% - 11% of body weight in the winter and 19% - 25% during the summer. In a 1958 study, Merino sheep drank 12 times more water in the summer than winter when it was dry and temperatures exceeded 100°F (38°C).

High temperatures are often accompanied by dry weather, resulting in lower moisture content in grazed forages. Dry forages increase water needs. Salt consumption increases water intake. Young animals need more water (on a percent body weight basis) than adults because a greater percentage of their body weight is water. Young animals need to drink more often because they drink less water at a time and have a more rapid metabolism.

Sheep will drink more water than they need for metabolism, perhaps as a pre-adaption to heat stress and water deprivation. Another way sheep adapt to heat stress is by producing more concentrated urine.

Shade

Access to shade is another important aspect of managing livestock during hot weather. Livestock shelters do not need to be complicated or elaborate. Mature trees provide excellent shade (and shelter) and are usually the least-cost alternative. If natural shelter is not available, many sheep and goat producers use quonset huts, plastic calf hutches, polydomes, and/or carports to provide shelter for grazing animals.

Simple shade structures can be constructed from shade cloth, mesh fabric, tarps, canvas, or sheet metal. Movable shade structures are suitable for intensive rotational grazing systems. All livestock should be able to lie down in the shade structure or area at the same time. Lying down in a cool spot provides additional relief from the heat.

While there is disagreement as to whether grazing livestock require shade, numerous studies show the benefits to shade. In addition to improving animal welfare, access to shade may improve weight gain, milk production, and reproduction. The benefits (to shade) would be greatest in humid environments.

When livestock are housed, the key is good ventilation and air movement. It may be necessary to install fans or other cooling systems in barns and similar structures. Research has shown cool water spraying to reduce heat stress and improve welfare of goats.

It goes without saying that livestock should not be handled, worked, or transported during the heat of the day. If livestock must be worked, they should be handled in the early morning or late evening hours.

More nutrient-dense diets are usually preferred during periods of high heat and/or humidity. This is because animals generate more body heat when they digest poor quality feed. Though grains (e.g. corn) are considered "hot" rations in other respects, less body heat is produced when livestock digest grain as compared to forages, especially poor quality forages. The feed supplement that produces the least amount of heat is fat.

Continued on next page

Heat stress

Under normal circumstances, livestock are able to maintain their body temperature at a safe range, so long as they have shade and plenty of water. In extreme heat, they will decrease their grazing time and spend more time in the shade, especially during the heat of the day. They will graze mostly in the evening and early morning hours. They should be allowed to rest during the heat of the day.

While heat stress (exhaustion or stroke) is not very common in sheep and goats in temperate climates, it may occur, especially if stock are handled during the hottest part of the day. Clinical signs of heat stress include continual panting, rapid breathing, weakness, inability to stand, and an elevated rectal temperature (over 105°F/40.6°C). If rectal temperature exceeds 107°F (41.7°C), death may occur, as the animal's cells begin to degenerate.

Animals suspected of being heat-stressed should be moved to a cool, shaded area with good air circulation. The obvious goal of treatment is to lower body temperature. Sheep should be cooled by applying rubbing alcohol to the area between their rear legs. Besides not being covered with wool, this area has a lot of vascular activity. Woolled sheep should not be sprayed with cool water as this will prevent cooling. Air will not be able to pass through the wetted fleece.

It's okay to spray cool water over other livestock or to spray water over a sheep or goat's wool less areas. Other cooling treatments include ice applications, submersion in ice, and cool water enemas. Always be careful to make sure the cold treatment isn't too great a temperature shock to the animal's vascular system.

Heat-stressed animals should be offered ample water and encouraged to drink small amounts. It may be necessary to administer fluids to animals that have become dehydrated as a result of their exposure to extreme heat and/or humidity. Woolly (or hairy animals) should be sheared as conditions allow.

Productivity

Extreme heat can have a profound effect on productivity, especially if the onset of heat is sudden, not giving livestock ample time to adapt. It goes without saying that growth rates are reduced in hot weather, as livestock forage less and have reduced appetites. This situation is often worsened by dry, poor quality forage. If temperatures subside, there is often a risk of acidosis or bloat as livestock gorge on feed.

Prolonged high temperatures (above 90°F/32.2°C) can impair reproduction. Overheated rams may lack libido (sexual desire). Ideally, rams should be sheared six to eight weeks before the onset of the breeding season. Woolly scrotums should be sheared. In extreme heat, rams can be housed during the day and put with the ewes at night.

After a ram or buck has been affected by heat stress, it will take six to seven weeks before he produces semen that is capable of fertilization. Fully-developed sperm are less susceptible to heat stress than sperm in the developing stages. High temperatures can also be detrimental to embryo survival and fetal development.

Heat stress lowers the natural immunity of animals, making them more susceptible to disease. It is not uncommon to see cases of pneumonia in extremely hot weather. In general, animals will have less tolerance for parasitic and other opportunistic diseases.

During periods of high heat and/or humidity, livestock should be checked frequently for signs of distress.



Keeping Your Eyes on the Prize

by Erik A, Smith, Regional Field Crops Specialist

As soon as seeds are in the ground, we're watching. Driving slowly past the field, maybe stopping and getting out to get a closer look. Maybe grabbing a trowel to peek below the surface. Scrutinizing every square inch to make sure crops are up, weeds are down, and leaves are clean. And we should be paying attention, no doubt. But while we're keeping a sharp eye on the crops, we need to remember to pay closest attention to the things that matter most: the health of both our land and our bank accounts. Clean crops and highly fertile soils should come in support of those things, not despite them.

In a recent weekly crop update (June 24th), we saw a soybean plant from western NY covered in soybean aphids (see photo). The recommended threshold for soybean aphid is 250 aphids per plant, which the plant may very well have exceeded. So break out the sprayers and hose them down before they rob yield, right? Not so fast. Seeing this many aphids on a young soybean plant isn't unusual for this time of year, since they overwinter as eggs on buckthorn trees - Which. Are. Everywhere (sadly). So they easily colonize soybean fields from right next door. But these early "infestations" are seldom ubiquitous in the fields at this point. So the 250 aphid/plant threshold is an average. So if the average is still 250 after scouting 20-30 random plants throughout the field, then maybe the case for spraying is stronger. But even then, we don't have sound data supporting spraying for these thresholds until after V4 (4 trifoliolate leaves). These early-infested plants are the first wave of soybean aphid, and it could be weeks before the infestation spreads, at which point spraying might finally be warranted. Spraying too early can eliminate predators that would otherwise stem the tide of later aphid infestations that literally rain down from the sky, and clear space for spider mites if conditions turn hot and dry.



Table 6.6.1. Chemical control of soybean aphid.

NOTE: When treating aphid populations with one of the newer pyrethroid insecticides, it has been frequently observed that the use of this class of insecticide triggers a population buildup of spidermites particularly during hot dry periods of the growing season. The buildup of spidermites has been observed when the pyrethroid insecticide is used early in the season.

Product	Lbs. AI/Ac	Amount of Formulated Product	PHI (days)	Comments
*Baythroid XL	0.022	2.8 fl oz/ac	21	Pyrethroid; consult the label.
Dimethoate (Dimethoate 4E, etc.)	0.25-0.375	0.5-0.75 pts/ac	21	Organophosphate; consult the label
*Lorsban 4E	0.5-1.0	1.0-2.0 pts/ac	28	Organophosphate; consult the label
*Mustang (0.8 EC)	0.0175-0.025	2.8-4.0 fl oz/ac	21	Pyrethroid; consult the label
*Warrior II	0.015-0.025	0.96-1.60 fl oz/ac	30	Pyrethroid; consult the label.

Continued on next page

Another early eyesore can be foliar pathogens such as septoria brown spot, caused by the fungus *Septoria glycines* (see photo). *Septoria* persists between cropping seasons on plant material and splashes onto lower leaves with rainfall. If conditions are right (or wrong, depending on your perspective), the disease can spread through the mid and even upper canopy as the season progresses. This disease is widespread and most fields in NY will experience it in some capacity every year. The unifoliate leaves (the first “true” leaves on the plant, above the cotyledons) are usually the first casualties of this disease, though these leaves have evolved to naturally senesce and fall off anyway. In severe outbreaks, as much as 15% yield loss is possible, though this data comes from other states. In most areas, including NY, this is not a disease of economic concern, however unsightly it may be. IF a field is in an all-out crisis from this disease, the most critical period for protecting yield is at pod fill. But again, this is not something to fill the tank and empty your pockets over.



Jaime Cummings, NYS IPM Program



Gary Bergstrom

One thing that is more likely to be worth the expense is soil fertility. We all know that everything from lumber to liquid fertilizer and everything in-between is more expensive at the moment. It's tempting to want to scale back on our inputs. But this decision should be considered carefully, as a few dollars saved today could result in expensive forage purchases or reduced livestock output later. Look at the fertility value of your various inputs. Are you adding 250 lbs of N every year as a matter of course and usually only getting 150 bu/acre in return? Are you usually looking at a surplus? Then maybe you can afford to cut back on the sidedress or topdress and not run into shortages later. But those managing things more closely may be better off staying the course instead, if at all possible.

Sources:

2020 Cornell Guide for Integrated Field Crop Management

Difonzo, C. 2009. Heavy soybean aphid infestations on early-season soybeans, CDD #014. Michigan State Univ.

Dorrance, A. 2018. It's probably not Frogeye Leafspot and no Brown Spot IS NOT an economically important disease, C.O.R.N. Newsletter 2018-18, The Ohio State Univ.

G. Bergstrom, Personal Communication.

J. Lawrence, Personal Communication.

The Dairy Industry is Changing Before Our Eyes

by David R. Balbian, Regional Dairy Management Specialist

The dairy industry has been changing and evolving for as long as I can remember. The trend towards fewer but larger farms is continuing and has likely accelerated during this period of COVID19. The sale of quotas has prompted some to cash out and exit the industry. Quotas or a two-tiered pricing system based on historical production has made it difficult to plan for the future. This phenomenon is not unique to the northeast. These types of supply management systems exist in other parts of the country as well. Yet this approach does not seem to have been very effective in dampening down the milk supply. Some handlers have not implemented supply management systems. These have been mostly independent handlers. They do not have the luxury of charging back to the producer member losses incurred from excess milk sold at a discount or dumped. One way they deal with an excess supply is to notify some supplying dairies that they no longer wish to purchase their milk. We have seen this in our own local region. It creates lots of stress and difficult decisions need to be made.

So, what is causing the national milk supply to continue to increase with quotas in place and low milk prices for non-quota milk? Some producers under quota are still producing above quota and simply receiving a lower price for over quota milk. Are they thinking their quota might be increased or lifted at some time? Some producers not under a quota are producing well over their historical production. The Dairy Margin Coverage program and other risk management tools are providing income that helps to make up for the a low milk price and low margins after feed costs.

Research and new technology has played a big role in increased milk output on a per cow basis. Computing technology has improved our ability to manage records on large numbers of cows. Cow monitoring systems, robotic milkers, and genomics have all advanced because of computerization. Improvements in dairy nutrition, forage quality, cow comfort, and genetics have all increased milk output. At one time if you had a 20,000 lb. herd average you had the top herd in the county. Now that is below average. A 30,000 lb. herd average is now the new high performance standard.

So, what do we do to balance the milk supply with demand? To me it seems like the only effective way to hold down production is to have a national quota system that every dairy must participate in. I am not advocating for or against a national quota system, but it seems it would be the only way to effectively control the milk supply. The chances of a national quota system being implemented are pretty much zero. Consumer groups have lots of political clout and a national system will be met with cries that dairy products will become unaffordable along with cries of "price enhancement." Politically a national quota system is dead in the water. Consumers have been the real winners as all of these changes have taken place in the dairy industry. The result has been a plentiful supply of low cost dairy products.

Dairy Industry continued

I will never forget some podcasts that Bob Cropp, Professor Emeritus University of Wisconsin participated in over the years. He discussed what influences milk production output. When milk prices are favorable total output increases. This is basic economics 101. Dairy producers hate to pay more in taxes, so they reinvest in the business. That often means an expansion, which creates more milk production. When milk prices are low some producers will increase milk output as a way to increase cash flow. So, the question that comes up is, “when does milk output ever go down?” Well, the answer is that milk output goes down when milk prices are low long enough to drive some producers out of business and cause cows to go to the beef pen. This is a very slow and economically painful process, but it is reality.

The increased economic competitiveness in the industry has caused some producers to transition to organic production and a few have transitioned to grass fed organic production. Those categories do represent a small portion of U.S. dairy production, especially the later. However, it has allowed those farms to remain smaller and still generate a sustainable income. Some (very few) dairy producers have delved into the processing and marketing of their own milk or dairy products. This entirely new and additional enterprise requires a new set of marketing skills.

The geographic center of dairy production in the country has been moving west for quite some time. Not long ago New York was 3rd in national production. Then Idaho passed us. Now (at least for the month of May) Texas has edged ahead of New York. That will move us into 5th place. New York has still been increasing milk production, just not as fast as Idaho and Texas. California, Idaho, & Texas all have a new modern high output dairy industry. Wisconsin, along with New York, has a mix of newer and more traditional smaller dairies.

So, what will the future bring? I can only speculate about the future. However, it seems that the past trends of fewer but larger will continue. Some growth in organic, grass fed organic and local processing and marketing is what I would expect. I expect long term we will still see a vibrant dairy industry in the Northeast and the upper Midwest. The advantages these traditional dairy areas still have is plentiful water (most of the time), the ability to produce forages at a reasonable cost, and a market that is nearby (New York City, Boston, & the Metropolitan areas along the coast down to Washington D.C. The big western states of California, Idaho, & Texas will continue to be very big players in the industry. Water is a big issue in California, along with environmental challenges. This is nothing new and we have seen the impacts with some short-term production declines in the past. Farms are drilling wells deeper and deeper in California and Texas to obtain water. Will there be a point in time when those wells come up dry? It is hard to say, but at some point in time, water and environmental challenges will have an increased impact on dairy production in that part of the country.



Photo by Rusell Hendry, Getty Images

What Farm Employees and Managers Can and Cannot Say About Unions, 2021

by Richard Stup, Cornell University, Ag Workforce Specialist

New York farm employees have the right to organize in unions and collectively bargain under the state's 2019 farm labor law that took effect January 1, 2020. Farm employers need to understand that in an environment where employees may try to organize there are some special rules about what farm owners, managers and supervisors can and cannot say or do about unions. State and federal laws identify these activities as "unfair labor practices" and they may apply to employers and managers, unions, or to employees.

The law permitting farm employee unions is a state law and will be administered by the NY Public Employee Relations Board (PERB). The law has a clause in it that says: "It shall be an unfair labor practice for an agricultural employer to discourage union organization or to discourage an employee from participating in a union organizing drive, engaging in protected concerted activity, or otherwise exercising the rights guaranteed under this article." It remains to be seen how strictly the state will interpret and enforce this clause.

Most unions are governed by a federal law called the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). We won't know with certainty exactly how the state will administer the new state law until its been in place for a few years, but we can take some general guidance from how the federal law is administered. As always, this is general guidance for educational purposes, not specific legal advice. You should seek competent legal counsel if you have specific questions about union organizing activities and your management response to it.

Continued on next page



Cornell Cooperative Extension

**AGRICULTURAL
WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT**

Farms and Unions continued

Two acronyms, **TIPS** and **FOE** give employers general guidance about what they can and cannot say or do during a union organizing effort. Again, these are based on federal labor law.

T-I-P-S covers what employers cannot say or do:

T is for Threats. Employers cannot threaten employees with consequences if they support or vote for the union. Employers can't discipline, terminate, reduce benefits, or take other adverse action against employees because they support a union.

I is for Interrogate. Employers are not allowed to ask employees questions about the organizing effort, what they think about it, or the names of employees who support the union or attend meetings.

P is for Promise. Employers cannot promise pay increases, greater benefits, promotions or other valuable items in exchange for keeping the union out.

S is for Surveillance. Using spies (whether employees or not), video cameras, or taking photos of people attending a union meeting are all banned as surveillance.

Of course, farm employers have free speech rights under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. **F-O-E** outlines the things that employers can say during a union organizing effort.

F is for Facts. Employers can share factual information about the union organizing process and potential collective bargaining process, and other matters such as union dues. They can talk about real, verifiable facts about the financial condition of the business and the industry and implications for employee compensation and benefits. They can also talk about how relationships between management and employees will change if a business becomes a union environment.

O is for Opinions. Employers can make clear their own personal opinions about a union, whether supportive or against. If an employer expresses an opposing opinion, it is important that it not be delivered as a threat. If an employer says to employees during the organizing process: "I'm not in favor of a union and I do not think it is the best thing for our business," this may or may not be an unfair labor practice, depending on the context and whether it could be received as a threat. If the employer adds to this statement, "but I will respect the law," then it would most likely not be an unfair labor practice.

E is for Examples. Employers are allowed to share specific examples such as actual union contracts that have been negotiated, news reports of other union activities, or examples of current results from managers and employees working together directly.

It is important to note that the NY state farm labor law specifically identified a few other unfair labor practices:

- Farm employees or unions are not allowed to strike or otherwise slow down farm work.
- Farm employers are not allowed to "lockout" or prevent employees from working as a result of a contract dispute.

Poisonous Plants to Livestock

by Ashley McFarland, Regional Livestock Specialist

Summer has sprung upon us quite fast this year. As we are trying to catch up with spreading manure, rotationally grazing and making dry hay for our livestock we should be very aware of plants that look unfamiliar in our pastures or hay fields. Often these plants really start to set themselves apart in late June/ July.

First is recognizing you have a poisonous plant and managing that so your livestock do not come in contact with it. However, we all have that one animal that does not stay on the correct side of the fence and they may be exposed. The first signs to observe when a toxicity may be a factor are the following: weight loss, lethargic, goes off feed, or appears unthrifty. These plants contain very toxic compounds that can kill an animal with just one bite, however other plants may only cause production loss and other issues in the animal.

Signs of poisoning:

- 1.) Herbicides and Pesticides were recently used for weed control
- 2.) Pastures were recently fertilized with nitrogen
- 3.) Different forage source has been fed
- 4.) Recently rotating animals to new paddock
- 5.) Pasture supply is sporadic due to overgrazing or drought like conditions
- 6.) Animals were moved into new pasture on empty stomachs

Poisonings usually occur early or late summer when forage is short. Often in a dry year we will see a lot more toxicity because weeds tend to survive with little water sources. I recommend you take extra precautions to look over new areas that are intended for grazing.

On a typical year where there are plenty of forages to consume livestock will avoid poisonous plants, however when feed is short and animals get hungry they will often eat plants that could cause harm.

A few common plants we see in our region that can cause toxicity or death are the following:



Buttercup



Butterfly Milkweed

Continued on next page



Chockberry
(leaves, flower, & berries)



Cocklebur



Hemlock



Nightshade (deadly)



Oak
(White, Northern Red, Bur)

Central New York Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team

Nicole L. Tommell, M. Ag.Ed
Team Leader
Farm Business Management Specialist
Phone: 315-867-6001
Email: nt375@cornell.edu

Ashley McFarland, PAS
Area Livestock Specialist
Phone: 315-604-2156
Email: am2876@cornell.edu

David R. Balbian, MS, PAS
Area Dairy Management Specialist
Phone: 518-312-3592
Email: drb23@cornell.edu

Erik A. Smith, Ph.D.
Area Field Crop Specialist
Phone: 315-219-7786
Email: eas56@cornell.edu

Stay in Touch

Website: cnydfc.cce.cornell.edu

Facebook Page: facebook.com/cnydlfc

Join our E-mail list: <http://eepurl.com/hh3vBj>

**A program and funding partnership between Cornell University,
Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Cornell Cooperative Extension
Associations of Chenango, Fulton, Herkimer, Madison, Montgomery,
Otsego, Saratoga, and Schoharie Counties.**