



Cornell Cooperative Extension | Northwest NY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Program

Serving Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming and Yates Counties.

Quarterly Highlights July - September 2018

NWNY TEAM

Ten Cornell Cooperative Extension county offices support the NWNY program so that producers in their counties have access to affordable agricultural education in four specialized areas:

- ⇒ Dairy Management
- ⇒ Farm Business
- ⇒ Field Crops
- ⇒ Small Farms/Livestock



New Faces and New Skills on the NWNY Team

It is always hard when experienced team members call it a career and retire. The NWNY Team lost two very valuable members this summer. Cathy Wallace, our team administrative assistant, and Jerry Bertoldo, our senior dairy specialist, decided to move on to the next stages of their lives after illustrious careers serving the farmers and agribusinesses of NWNY. We all wish them well!

We have been fortunate to fill these two positions with excellent professionals in their field. Linda Risewick is our new team administrative assistant and Margaret Quaassdorff is our new dairy specialist. Both are based in the Genesee CCE office in Batavia.

Linda brings with her an excellent background of working within the agricultural community. She has worked for Farm Credit, Upstate Farms, and for the past 11 years, as the office manager for Carolina Eastern-Crocker in Stafford. Margaret has her dairy training from the University of Vermont and the University of Wisconsin – Madison. After graduate school, Margaret used her dairy nutrition skills as a consultant for Vita Plus in Wisconsin. Most recently, Margaret was the herd manager of the 300-cow robot/parlor teaching dairy at the Northeast Iowa Dairy Foundation.

Please join us in welcoming the new members of the NWNY Team!

PRICE ANALYSIS FOR CORN SILAGE FALL 2018

Several years ago, in response to the program's Field Crops Advisory Committee's desire for work on pricing forages, the team developed an empirical price analysis for corn silage. The team updates the work annually. Estimates are posted to its website (www.nwnyteam.cce.cornell.edu) and reported in Ag Focus.

The fall 2018 estimate reflects an update to the data set, and other changes to the statistical model, to better capture changes in supply and demand relationships. Corn silage price estimates combined with an understanding of relevant supply and demand factors from the individual farm business owner's perspective, including local conditions, aid decision-making regarding corn silage price. Given the most



recently available data, price analysis for NY suggests an estimated corn silage price of about \$41 per ton. The estimate reflects less scarcity in the market for corn silage when compared to the fall 2017 estimate of about \$54 per ton.

Regarding the original work, one producer commented, *"I think that your work on this will be helpful for many folks."* Regarding the updates, producers commented that the work has been a valuable addition to the tool set for determining corn silage price.

CORN SILAGE PRE-HARVEST WORKSHOPS PREPARE HARVEST TEAMS FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS

A lot of time is spent on the basics to achieve an optimum corn silage harvest. This time is justified as these foundational steps are critical to a successful harvest, where the decisions made during a very short time period impact the farm's production performance and economics for the upcoming year. In late August 2018, the NWNY Team combined efforts with Joe Lawrence of PRO-DAIRY and industry representatives to discuss the 2018 corn silage crop outlook, and best management practices for the year's corn silage harvest. Forty plus participants attended one or more of the four separate workshops held on four different progressive farms over two days throughout the NWNY region.

Participants learned of the benefits of putting up a high quality crop and the steps to reach quality and yield goals. They were also encouraged to consider



Photo source: Joe Lawrence

the short and long-term economics of corn silage cutting height, additional packing tractor weight, kernel processing score, and inoculant use. Abundant farmer to farmer discussion was valuable in sharing experiences with different equipment and technologies, with highlights including learning from each host farm's harvest practices, as well as seeing and exploring the different aspects of each farm's kernel processor. Participants left feeling better prepared for the 2018 corn silage harvest, aware of the impact their decisions have on the farm's success, and thinking about improvements to be made in the years to come.

SOIL HEALTH

A MEANS FOR ACHIEVING ON-FARM ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL & RESOURCE OBJECTIVES

Various advisory and program committees that direct the work of the NWNy Program reinforce what team members hear from other producers about the increasingly important topic of soil health -- *understanding agronomic, economic, environmental and other resource considerations underlying decisions regarding soil health practices are key to realizing optimal soil health practice adoption levels.*

Team members developed and implemented multi-subject matter, multi-target audience research and extension efforts to increase farmers' and other stakeholders', (i.e. land owners, advisors and others) understanding of soil health topics.

At the request of USDA/NRCS regional economists, the NWNy Team developed and delivered a one-hour webinar for NRCS conservation planners titled, **"Cost Effectiveness in Conservation Programs: Return on Investment for Conservation Practices and Systems"**, February, 2018. At the request of the USDA/NRCS, NE Soil Health Specialist, the NWNy team developed and delivered a similar session for a NYS Soil Health Planners Certification Course, May 2018.

American Farmland trust contracted with the NWNy Team as part of a *Great Lakes Protection Fund Pilot Project* in the Genesee Watershed to increase the adoption of conservation practices and enhance soil health. Extension organized learning circles that engaged women, mostly over sixty, non-operating landowners in learning opportunities about soil health and conservation practices.

In addition, the NWNy Team worked to implement a **Soil Health TAG Team**, and participated with the WNY Soil Health Alliance Board. A team member is also a participating in American Farmland Trust's first *NY State Soil Health Specialist Training Program*.

The live NRCS webinar event had 313 participants,



131 viewers of the archived webinar to-date, and about 40 participants from the NYS Soil Health Planners course who learned to estimate expected changes in profit associated with conservation practices and systems. Analysis provides valuable information when helping farm business owners with decisions. Estimates from the NYS certification course suggest that about 25 certified planners will apply what they learned while working with over 300 NYS farmers, helping them achieve objectives via soil health practice planning and implementation.

Learning circles participants represent underserved landowners that are hungry to learn about farming practices and how they enhance productive value of their land while protecting the environment. Building soil health is part and parcel to achieving these goals. Through reflective appraisal exit evaluations women have indicated an increase in knowledge of greater than 20% from participation in learning circles.

The first Soil Health TAG team consisted of 20 participants, which included growers with advanced knowledge and experience in the adoption of soil health management practices. The group was able to sufficiently talk about their experiences and provide knowledgeable advice to those in the group looking for more direction on specific types of management practices.

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