



# Cornell Cooperative Extension North Country Regional Ag Team

*Serving Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties*

## Program Highlights

January - March  
2019

### Dairy Prospects Program Targets High School Students Interested in Dairy

Started in the early 2000s, the Dairy Prospects Program is now run as a collaboration between CCE Jefferson, CCE Lewis, and the North Country Regional Ag Team. This year-long program is offered every other year to students in 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade in Lewis and Jefferson Counties who are interested in discovering exciting opportunities in the dairy industry. The Dairy Prospects Program exposes the 6 to 10 participants to leaders in the dairy industry who serve as examples of the exciting future the dairy industry can provide. It allows students to learn more about careers and opportunities in the industry, while making lasting friendships and connections.



The program consists of hands-on workshops and educational trips taking place 7 or 8 times throughout the school year. Activities completed so far this year include a team-building exercise at Camp Wabasso, a trip to the William H. Miner Institute, a trip to the New York State Farm Show, tours of colleges, and tours of local dairies and agri-businesses that highlighted the use of technology on farms and value-added products. The year ends with a graduation dinner where the students present what they have seen and learned over the year.

The students have been very excited to have the opportunity to be exposed to different things in the industry, like seeing robotic milkers and a large rotary parlor. When asked what they like most about the program, some students responded with “getting opinions from different parts of the industry”, “the variety of places we went and all the people we talked to”, and “going to different farms”.

This program is a great example of how the local county CCE associations and the NCRAT team are working together. Specifically, this program helps strengthen the relationship between Cooperative Extension with local agri-businesses and farms as well as targets the next generation to get them excited and involved in the dairy industry.

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## Calf Health Treatment Protocols, Compliance, and Economic Impact

Prudent use of antimicrobials is of great importance for dairy farms. One of the areas that we can target is the use of antibiotics in non-lactating animals, specifically, youngstock. The first step is focusing on disease prevention, then controlling new infections and reducing the risk of spreading the infection to herd mates. For the latter two topics, treatment protocols (and compliance) are important to optimize cure rates and minimize recurrent episodes. Treatment protocols and records also reduce the risk of antibiotic overuse, residues, and resistance. In late 2017, we applied for a grant with the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program with the following 3 objectives: determine protocol compliance for calftooth illnesses on NNY dairy farms, determine the treatment cost associated with calftooth illness, and bring awareness to antibiotic stewardship to increase consumer confidence in our food supply. In January 2018, the grant was awarded and we began to identify farms that were interested in participating and met the criteria. Treatment protocols were collected in early 2018, and treatment records were collected through August 2018.

The data indicated that calftooth illnesses appeared at two primary times, 8 to 31 days of age, and then again at 61 to 120 days. The early timeframe was primarily due to scours, and the later was due to pneumonia. The majority of calves experienced at least 2 different illness events, with some calves having as many as 9 different illness events. The average treatment cost per calf per event was \$8.08, but overall treatment cost per calf over the 8-month period was \$18.17.

The two greatest challenges with this project were identifying, and subsequently enrolling farms, that had written calf treatment protocols, and accurate calf treatment records that included calf ID, date of treatment, the reason treated, the drug administered, and dosage. Many farms did not have written calf treatment protocols, and for those that did, many either did not keep calf treatment records, or kept very minimal records that didn't include all the necessary information. While this was the greatest challenge, it also provided an outreach opportunity and an additional impact. We were able to help numerous producers develop treatment protocols and facilitate conversations between the producer and the herd veterinarian to fully develop, write, and implement treatment protocols as well as use treatment records.

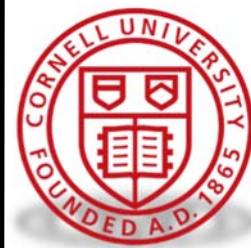
These results have been shared at Dairy Day programs in Lewis, Jefferson, St. Lawrence, and Franklin counties this past winter. Additionally, there will be at least one article summarizing the project published in the North Country Ag Advisor, and an abstract written and submitted to the American Dairy Science Association to be considered for a presentation at the ADSA meeting in June, 2019.

## Regional Ag Team Secures Funding for 15 Projects from 7 Different Sources

North Country farmers are continuously faced with challenges; it may be a pest problem in the corn field, sick calves, a need for better milk quality, controlling parasites, or unstable weather. All of these challenges (and more) can adversely impact the productivity and profitability of any farming operation. One responsibility of the North Country Regional Ag Team is to conduct on-farm research and data collection to find solutions to these challenges to provide support to agriculture industries across Northern New York. The goal of these projects is to help farmers overcome challenges presented to them and increase productivity and profitability.

This year, our North Country Regional Ag Team has received funding for 15 research and outreach projects from 7 different grantors. Topic areas include: risk management, cow comfort and lameness, dairy herd record-keeping, *Salmonella* Dublin monitoring, development of protocols and employee training, western bean cutworm, field comparisons of crop varieties, use of nematodes for control of corn rootworm, herbicide-resistant weeds, and farm business transitions. Team members are often the primary investigator, but also collaborate with other specialists, county ag staff, and campus faculty for some projects. All projects have an outreach component, which may include: workshops, farm discussion groups, field days, newsletter articles, or fact sheets. Project results will be presented at workshops held across the region, at statewide programs, and some national conferences as well. The results of the projects will also help to inform and drive future educational programs.

Funding sources and partners for these projects include the Northern New York Agriculture Development Program (NNYADP), New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI), and the USDA, along with commercial industries, NYS Ag & Markets, and the Adirondack North Country Association.



## Diversified Discussion Groups Accelerating Farms

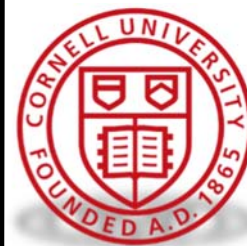
In the first quarter of 2019, the Farm Business Management Specialist led a new “financial based discussion group” meeting. The first was a group of diversified farmers from across four counties that formed after taking another business planning class last fall. They decided to create a formal group that would share full financials with each other and meet 2-3 times per year. The NCRAT Specialist was invited to lead the discussion and provide financial reviews at their first meeting that required participants to create a 2019 budget based on 2018 numbers and plans for 2019. The Specialist provided all participants with a customizable template that allows them to complete both the 2019 budget as well as 2019 actual financial performance. The discussion format was agreed upon by the participants in advance, with each farm given time to explain their numbers, followed by a comment period from the group, then comments and an assessment from the Farm Business Management Specialist. The overall goal was for each farm to get an outside perspective and see where they need to make financial improvements. This format forced farm business owners to address the tough questions and explain previous business choices. This is increasingly important for farm businesses as the isolation and individualized nature of farm business can lead to fixed mindsets and a lack of productive change. Farmers in the group were frequently asking the group “what should we do next?”, a question that is asked of the Farm Business Management Specialist quite often. The answer provided was always “it depends”, to the frustration of the farm sharing at that moment. The Farm Business Management Specialist was quick to address this topic though, indicating that the purpose of shared financials and group meetings is not to get answers from other members. The real benefit of these collaborations is to identify opportunities (areas for improvement) for the business that align with all of the following: business mission, financial condition, and moral standards. By the end of the meeting, group members each had various areas of improvement and enterprise diversification to explore further that ultimately aligned with this overall goal: to be more profitable while maintaining a reasonable number of hours worked. These businesses are following the example set by all other industries today: focusing on improving profitability through cost control and efficiencies, but not at the expense of time off or quality of life. While the group agreed that there is a fair bit of work required to have these meetings, it is necessary to complete the financial prep work to have the most productive and meaningful conversations that result in additional tasks and financial evaluation. Although time consuming, they felt that the benefits far outweighed the cost. The group agreed to meet again in the fall to review and critique year-to-date numbers in addition to addressing any other concerns that may come up. The Farm Business Management Specialist would like to focus on working with more farms one-on-one to get their records to a standard that would allow them to join or participate in these types of groups. This type of collaboration will provide a serious competitive edge going forward for farms of all sizes and industries.



# Harvest New York

## **Northern NY Producer Products at the International Restaurant and Foodservice Show of New York**

On March 3-5, 2019, the International Restaurant and Foodservice Show of New York was held at the Javits Convention Center in NYC. This show brings in approximately 20,000 visitors from the Northeast and 550 exhibitors from all over the world. This year nine Northern NY farmers from Jefferson, Lewis, Oswego, and Clinton counties sent products down to the show. Farmers received many praises and new markets for their products. Harvest NY, CCE Lewis County, and CCE Jefferson County sent representatives to help promote the Northern NY farm products. This opportunity was made possible from funding support from the North Star Food Hub. The North Star Food Hub is a four-county (Jefferson, St. Lawrence, Lewis, and Oswego) regional food hub initiative to help farmers expand market opportunities.



## **Produce Safety Alliance Food Safety Training**

Harvest NY continues to support food safety training for the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). In March 2019, Harvest NY hosted a 2-day FSMA training in North Bangor at the St. Lawrence Valley Produce Auction. This training brought in 27 farmers from Franklin, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence counties. Farmers spent the first day and a half learning about food safety and the second half day writing food safety plans. These attendees planned to meet again in April and continue to work on their food safety plans. This event was made possible with funding support from the Northeast Center for Advance Food Safety, Produce Safety Alliance, and NYS Agriculture and Markets. In addition to this training, the Harvest NY specialist also participated as a Produce Safety Alliance trainer at the Eastern New York Fruit and Vegetable Conference (36 participants) and in Broome County (14 participants).

## **Northern New York Marketing Workshops**

Harvest NY continued to provide educational marketing support in Northern NY. This support included teaching and facilitating a variety of marketing programs across the region. The workshops offered were Agritourism, General Marketing, and Farmers Markets. These programs reached around 24 farmers across Northern New York. These workshops intend to prepare farmers for the coming marketing season.

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### Our Mission

“The North Country Regional Ag Team aims to improve the productivity and viability of agricultural industries, people, and communities in Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton, and Essex Counties by promoting productive, safe, economically, and environmentally sustainable management practices and by providing assistance to industry, government, and other agencies in evaluating the impact of public policies affecting the industry.”

*Contact us directly through our website: <http://ncrat.cce.cornell.edu/>*

*Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities*

Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities. NYS College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, NYS College of Human Ecology, and NYS College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University, Cooperative Extension associates, county governing bodies, and U.S.D.A. cooperating.