

Cornell Cooperative Extension

South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Program

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

By the Numbers

PROGRAM AREA	Number of Events	Total Attended
Dairy & Crop Production & Management	28	664
Management & Finance for Dairy & Crops	5	73
Organic Dairy & Field Crop Production & Marketing	26	1375
Supporting Environmental Stewardship	2	70
Soil Health	24	1173
Public Education for Ag Awareness	13	4461
Producer Alternatives/New Ventures (Hemp)	3	42
Sum Total	101	7858

Blueprint for Change: Navigating Dairy Decision Making

Mary Kate Wheeler, Farm Business Management Specialist

Given the current economic challenges facing dairy producers, many are finding that “the way we’ve always done things” is not working anymore. Consequently, dairy managers are considering all sorts of opportunities to improve their bottom line. Across the dairy industry, farmers are exploring potential actions, ranging from incremental production changes to developing new markets for milk or calves, to launching entirely new enterprises. Some farms are even contemplating strategies to reduce labor on the farm so that one or more family members can pursue off-farm employment for supplemental income.

There is a big leap from considering options to making a significant change on the farm. During a down cycle, many farmers are preoccupied with immediate cash flow concerns at the expense of financial analysis and planning. This can

impair a farm’s decision making processes and limit its ability to act on opportunities that could improve profitability. Various industry stakeholders have recognized a need for education and support around financial analysis and business planning, in order to help dairy farmers improve decision making and chart a course toward long-term farm viability.

In September 2018, our team joined a collaborative effort led by PRO-DAIRY director Thomas Overton and funded by Chobani, to address this need for dairy producers across the central New York region. This partnership resulted in a workshop titled *Blueprint for Change: Navigating Dairy Decision Making*, held in four locations during the final week of October, 2018. Our South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Team hosted one of the four sessions at CCE Broome on

Cornell Cooperative Extension links the research and extension efforts at Cornell University, and Cornell AgriTech, the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, providing the knowledge to maximize New York State’s agricultural and natural resources. The South Central New York Dairy and Field Crops Program is a Cornell Cooperative Extension partnership between Cornell University and the CCE Associations in 6 Counties.

Live Births and Calf Exams Included in Calving & Neonatal Calf Care Training Course

Betsy Hicks, Area Dairy Management Specialist

Specialized skills and knowledge of potential issues cows and calves may experience through the birthing process is key for herd managers of dairy farms. As farms strive to become more self-reliant and provide better care for their animals, regional dairy specialists with Cornell Cooperative Extension and Pro-Dairy teamed up to provide a course for this labor force that focused on calving and initial calf and cow care after birth. As many people that work on farms know, having a hands-on component included in the workshop is key. As such, the course was designed around two days of instruction, which included both classroom presentations, as well as a farm walk through, demonstrations and hands-on calf or cow exams both days.

Having a small class size guaranteed ample opportunity for attendees to ask questions during classroom time and participate in calf exams as led by each farm's veterinarians during each farm walk through. Classroom sessions included



presentations on Stages and Signs of Labor, Assessing Calving Situation, as well as Delivery and Immediate Calf Care, Medication and

Supplementation for Calves, and Sanitation. During the farm walk-through, participants were actually able to witness a difficult calving on the first day of the workshop, assess what the problem was, and assist in the birth of the calf. On the second day of the workshop, the herd veterinarian led the workshop through an exam of a calf, which included listening to heart and lungs, temperature and general assessments of health.



All participants stated that the course presented them with new information. In

specific, information that was presented that is planned to be implemented into daily routine by observers included better cleaning of calf feeders and overall better attention to calf care and calf health. All participants ranked the importance of learning on-farm and the relevancy of the on-farm activities as a 4 or 5, with 5 being the highest score. All evaluations stated they would recommend attending the course to others, with reasons including, "Lots of information to learn from and take home", "It showed me new things to look for", and "It's very informative and presented well".

Blueprint for Change, continued . from cover

November 2, which drew seventeen participants, plus two PRO-DAIRY representatives, one NY FarmNet representative, and three members of our team.

Mary Kate Wheeler worked with Bonnie Collins from CCE Oneida County and Nicole Tommell from the Central NY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team to develop and deliver an interactive presentation. The talk reviewed factors driving change in the dairy industry, then outlined a systematic process for decision making on the farm. Participants broke up into small groups to practice applying the problem-solving process to a real world example. The presentation ended with a summary of resources available to farmers to support business planning, decision making, farm safety, and mental health.

How does a program like *Blueprint for Change* translate to farm-level impacts? The best indicator that we can measure is the number of farms that, after attending the workshop, have done additional work with members of our team to improve recordkeeping, benchmark financial performance, form an advisory group, or undertake additional business planning. As of February 2019, members of our team have followed up by

providing additional education and support to seven farms from the workshop audience:

- Two farms improved their accounting knowledge and recordkeeping skills by completing our QuickBooks for Farmers training in January 2019.
- One farm is working with Mary Kate to complete an in-depth update to their record keeping system.
- Three farms are working with Mary Kate to benchmark their businesses by completing the 2018 Dairy Farm Business Summary.
- One farm formed a Dairy Profit Team, facilitated by Mary Kate and Betsy Hicks, and held its first meeting in January 2019.
- One farm applied for funding through the Dairy Acceleration Program and worked with Betsy to complete the DAP baseline interview.

These efforts are ongoing, and will continue to influence the decisions and directions of farms that attended the original *Blueprint for Change* workshop.

Industrial Hemp Production Gains Traction in our Region, prompting visit from Senator Schumer

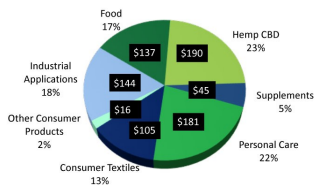
Janice Degni, CCE Hemp Technical Specialist



It's not often that there is a novel crop that offers new opportunity to farmers. Industrial Hemp (IH) and one of the plant's compounds, cannabidiol or CBD for short, has generated a lot of interest among health minded consumers and offers a lucrative market to our growers.

The production of Industrial hemp is new to our generation because its cultivation has been outlawed since the passage of the Marihuana Tax Act of 1937. It was grown extensively in colonial days, and in the 1940's during a national effort to encourage hemp production to help the US World War 2 efforts. The interest in hemp is partially fueled by the potential of the existing hemp market based on imports which has been estimated at nearly one billion dollars.

\$820 Million U.S. Hemp-Based Product Sales by Category in 2017



Source: Hemp Business Journal estimates (\$mil., consumer sales)

could learn about its growing habits and needs. NYS issued their first permit to a single grower in 2016. In 2019 we are anticipating over 400 growers. The majority will produce for CBD extraction. One of the challenges of a new industry are

The 2014 USDA Farm Bill allowed states to develop research programs to learn if hemp could be a viable crop. NYS developed a research program which allowed cultivation of IH after 80 years of prohibition so that we

the missing links in the supply chain from production through marketing. Those growing pains are recognized.

A "gold rush" mentality follows Hemp Madness. The promise of a healthy return from an agricultural crop is intoxicating. Many overlook the fine print which would read, a significant financial investment as well as labor is required for every acre planted, and there are risks along the way from selecting cultivars to growing seedlings to harvesting in a fall with continuous rain. The plant is attractive to insects and diseases and is susceptible to weed pressure.

Janice was appointed as a Hemp Technical Specialist after the Hemp Summit in the spring of 2017. She has provided background and resources to numerous inquiries, visited grower's fields and assessed pest incidence, formed a discussion group for growers and processors, organized workshops, and participates in the monthly Hemp Network conference calls with Cornell Researchers and Extension educators.



Senator Schumer visited Owego, in August 2018 to show his support for the passage of the Hemp Farming Act of 2018, a provision in the 2018 USDA Farm Bill which reclassifies IH from a narcotic to an agricultural crop.

Central New York Peer Group of Dairy Girl Network

Melanie Palmer, Ag Educator

The Dairy Girl Network (DGN) is a national organization that connects all women of the dairy industry, encouraging ideas and camaraderie in an effort to achieve personal and professional development. The Central New York peer group is focused on building camaraderie with other passionate dairy women, sharing ideas and experiences, encouraging one another and building relationships.

Sarah Ficken, Agriculture Educator, Madison County CCE, and Melanie Palmer, Agriculture Educator, South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Team, joined forces to get an active DGN group in motion. The plan was that meetings would cover a variety of topics, with guest speakers as needed and be held at different locations within the area.

The first meeting was held in August 2018 at Bob's Barbecue in Homer. Eleven women attended. Our guest speaker was Erica Leubner, Family Consultant with New York FarmNet and the topic was 'Stress – What to do about it'. Erica led the discussion on how to manage it and strategies for building

resiliency to stress. Several ladies shared their stressful situations, with the entire group which gave support and encouragement.

We had a second meeting in December with 11 women including some new faces. The topic for the day was 'Farm Finance Basics'. Mary Kate Wheeler, Business Management Specialist with the South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Team, reviewed some key principles of farm business management, including farm income statements, net worth and monitoring progress of the farm business using the Dairy Farm Business Summary as a guide. Discussion was abundant with lots of information shared and questions asked.

We are planning for the next meeting in April. We are confident that the group will continue to grow as several others have expressed interest but have been deterred by a calf being born or other farm needs that pop up at the last minute!



NY Dairy Grazing Apprentices Near Graduation

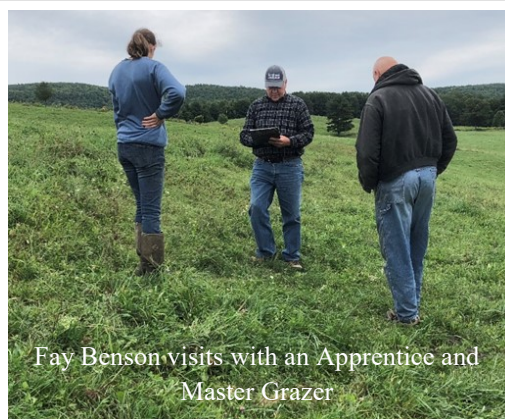
*Fay Benson, Small Dairy Technologies Educator and
Abbie Teeter, Program Coordinator*

It is a race to the finish for two Dairy Grazing Apprentices in New York: Liz Pickard and Missy Bennett! In Central New York, Liz has completed all the required related instruction and is working on completing her last 600 hours of on-the-job training in order to compete her Apprenticeship. Close by in the southern tier, Missy has exceeded the required 3700 hours of on-the-job training and is working to finish her final related instruction class of the required 300 hours to officially graduate the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA) Program. Liz (Truxton, NY) and Missy (Nichols, NY) are anticipated to be New York's first graduates of the program, both to move on to Journey Worker status as recognized by the Federal Department of Labor. The DGA program is administered by Fay Benson and Abbie Teeter with the South Central New York Dairy Team with an emphasis on small dairy technologies.

Two years ago, New York joined 9 other states in providing the only nationally approved apprenticeship program for agriculture. Of our 22 approved masters, 6 are paired with Apprentices. In addition to the two apprentices preparing for graduation, two have just celebrated their one-year anniversary in the program and two have begun the program within the last few months. The Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship requires 3700 on-the-job training hours and 300 hours of related instruction, including dairy and grazing-focused college courses, local pasture walks and discussion groups, and bi-monthly meetings with their education coordinator.

The Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship has had a variety of different funding sources since it began in 2016, both long- and short-term. It began with a local grazing fund to support the program start-up. Once this fund was used up, other grants have kept the

program active, including funds from Organic Valley and the NRCS. This summer, look for NRCS funded pasture walks which will support Master Graziers and Apprentices in the Northeast.



Fay Benson visits with an Apprentice and Master Grazer

Participants and supporters of DGA in New York recognize the need for the Apprentice program because dairies who adopt grazing as part of their management have shown that they can lower their cost of production and remain viable. In addition, New York has more organic dairies than any other state. Without this program, new and young farmers are difficult to find and train since there are few educational programs that teach grazing in the state.

What's next for the two future graduates? Missy earned youngstock as part of her pay from her Master, Rob Moore of Nichols, to build a herd. She is currently milking them on a rented farm in Tioga County while still working for Rob and his wife, Pam. Liz is applying to graduate school to expand on the practical knowledge she gained from her Master, Kathie Arnold, on Twin Oaks Farm in Truxton, and she has hopes to continue to work on the farm during her off time.

Team Events Get Press Coverage in the Ag Press

Country Folks

Lancaster Farming
THE FARMER'S CHOICE

PROGRESSIVE DAIRYMAN



Grazing Apprenticeship: <https://youtube/ikWd3Pp2iH4>

Feeder School Coverage: <https://www.progressivedairy.com/topics/feed-nutrition/how-to-audit-your-tmr-ration-for-consistency>

Emerging issues highlighted at Cornell's Cow Comfort Conference: Part 1: <https://countryfolks.com/emerging-issues-highlighted-at-cornells-cow-comfort-conference/>

Emerging issues highlighted at Cornell's Cow Comfort Conference: Part 2: <https://countryfolks.com/emerging-issues-highlighted-at-cornells-2nd-annual-cow-comfort-conference-part-2/>

Safety Hazards of Bunker Silos and Piles: <https://countryfolks.com/safety-hazards-of-bunker-silos-and-piles/>

Experts Say Cut the 'Heifer Fat': https://www.lancasterfarming.com/search/?sd=desc&l=25&s=start_time&f=html&t=article%2Cvideo%2Cyoutube%2Ccollection&app=editorial&nsa=edition&q=Experts+say+cut+the+heifer+fat

SCNY Dairy & Field Crops Extension Program