

A partnership between Cornell University and CCE Associations in these nine counties: Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne and Wyoming.

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS October - December 2020

Price Analysis for Corn Silage - Fall 2020

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 2020 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 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 most recently available data, price analysis for NY suggests an estimated corn silage price of about \$49 per ton. The estimate reflects slightly greater relative scarcity in the market for corn silage when compared to the fall 2019 estimate of about \$45 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 comment that the work has been a valuable addition to the tool set for determining corn silage price.



Weed Resistance Virtual Field Tour 2020

Glyphosate resistant weeds such as waterhemp and marestail continue to cause weed management issues for soybean and corn producers. Waterhemp populations now have been identified in 13 WNY counties while marestail has a presence in most of NY. To make matters worse these two weeds have also been found to have resistance to three other herbicide modes of action. It is very challenging to put together an herbicide program to control these weeds and prevent economic yield losses.

In 2019, the team collaborated with the NYS IPM Program, Bayer Chemical and Cornell Cooperative Extension on year-one of a waterhemp test plot on a farm in Seneca County. The project was funded by a two-year grant from the NY Farm Viability Institute. A field day with a walking tour of the plots in corn and soybeans demonstrated some effective herbicide programs and timings for growers to follow.

In 2020, this collaboration continued for year-two of the program. A research area was set up with 14 herbicide X timing treatments in soybean and 12 treatments in corn. A walking tour was set up for mid-July but was cancelled due to COVID risks. As an alternative, the NWNY team worked with Bryan Brown of the NYS IPM Program and Mike Hunter of the CCE



Screenshot from the recorded tour, from left to right: Mike Stanyard, Mike Hunter and Bryan Brown.

NNY Team to do a virtual tour of all the plots. Filmed by Jenn Thomas-Murphy of CALS, each plot was evaluated for percent control and effectiveness. The final product was edited by Bryan Brown and we offered a two-hour webinar of a virtual tour of all the corn and soybean plots.

The herbicide resistance virtual webinar was offered on October 21. Forty growers, extension and agribusiness personnel signed up to take the virtual tour. Each treatment was discussed in detail as to why it was successful or failed to provide adequate control. This virtual walking tour was a very effective method of showcasing the current herbicide programs that can be utilized by growers to provide season long control when applied at the right timing. The full virtual tour video can be viewed here, https://tinyurl.com/Virtual-Field-Tour-2020.

On-Farm Feeder School Provides Opportunity for Hands-On Experience

This year posed many challenges for traditional programming in 2020, but with key adjustments, English and Spanish speaking dairy employees still benefited. In an outdoor program event, where masks were worn and safety guidelines were followed, a total of 35 dairy farm feeders of all skill levels and dairy feed industry professionals, attended one of two in-person Feeder School events in November 2020. NWNY Team Specialists gave each day's presentations including demonstrations, in both English and Spanish while also promoting discussion among feeder participants. Participants came from 5 different counties.

According to the 2016 Dairy Farm Business Summary, purchased feed expenses account for 36% of total operating costs on a dairy farm, making feed the single largest expense. In addition, feeding and associated tasks take up 7.7% of the total labor hours on the farm. "Shrink", or feed losses, from the bunker silo to the feedbunk can range from 5-25%. These statistics show that the dairy feeder's actions have a direct impact on the largest expenses on dairy farms. Furthermore, cow health depends in part on dairy feeders, who also must be skilled employees to balance being efficient and doing a good job safely. This role also requires the skills to work collaboratively with other farm team members such as the herdsperson, manager, veterinarian, and nutritionist.

Each program event, one in Genesee County and one in Ontario County, was held outdoors in the Feed Center at each host farm. Participants stood apart while engaging in each day's session, and translation of presentations and discussion was provided through individual headsets to maintain distance. Participants left the program with increased knowledge in: evaluation and management of bunker silos and commodities, proper dry matter sampling technique, feed quality evaluation and troubleshooting, feeder safety, proper mixing and delivery techniques, and how to read the feedbunk to make appropriate ration adjustments, as well as communication with other key farm employees and partners regarding feeding dairy cows. This program was also run congruently with the 2020 Virtual Feeder School which allowed over 100 English-speaking and over 60 Spanish-speaking attendees from around the region, country, and world to gain knowledge in the aforementioned subjects via webinar, video, and live Q&A.



Margaret Quaassdorff speaking to participants at the On-Farm Feeder School on November 6, 2020. Photo: L. Eiholzer / CCE NWNY Team

Women Landowner Conservation Education with American Farmland Trust

With nearly one-third of the cropland in the Genesee River Basin being rented land, conservation education must reach beyond farm operators. In collaboration with American Farmland Trust (AFT), Cornell Cooperative Extension pioneered the learning circle methodology for engaging women landowners in discussion focused education on soil health and conservation practices. With new funding from an EPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Grant, AFT reached out to our CCE NWNY Team to mentor a new Stewardship Coordinator hired for the project, facilitate learning circles over a 3-year period, and develop a marketing plan for public outreach using a public art exhibition featuring conservation in action on Genesee River Basin farmland.

With the pandemic limiting in-person interaction, an evening virtual learning circle was piloted focusing on soil health. CCE facilitated the online discussion among 20 women. The featured topics included lively discussions of "Understanding Soil Health" with Nicole Kubiczki, USDA - Natural Resource Conservations Service

and "Soil Health Assessment" with Kirsten Kurtz, Cornell Soil Health Lab.

At a mid-October a field meeting at Fall Brook Farm in Geneseo seven women saw the difference in friability, organic matter and hard pan layer in a cultivated field setting and the adjoining forest with the same soil type. The field setting had been conventionally tilled for decades and has just started to be managed with reduced tillage in the last couple of seasons.

Women who attended both sessions indicated the lessons learned were valuable to them based upon comments at the end of sessions. These landowners are eager to learn more about the technical aspects of improved soil health and are interested to work more closely with farm operators of the land to protect Photo: J. Petzen / CCE NWNY Team and improve the soil.



Participants at the field meeting in Geneseo.