



Cornell Cooperative Extension

South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Program

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

PROGRAM AREA	Number of Events	Total Attended
Business Planning & Financial Management	15	285
Dairy & Crop Production and Management	28	881
Educating the Public about Agriculture	2	84
Human Resource Management	6	125
Organic Dairy & Field Crop Production & Marketing	3	215
Soil Health	3	93
Supporting Environmental Stewardship	3	157
Sum Total	60	1,840

*Due to COVID-19, all in-person meetings were restricted after March 15, 2020.
All of our regularly scheduled public Ag Awareness Events were cancelled.*

South Central Dairy & Field Crops Team



L-R Betsy Hicks, Mary Kate MacKenzie, Janice Degni, Melanie Palmer, Donette Griffith, Fay Benson

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.



COVID-19 Impacts and Dairy Team Response

South Central Dairy & Field Crops Team

One of the strengths of our South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Team is our ability to respond quickly to emerging issues, and develop educational programming to address evolving industry needs. The coronavirus pandemic brought unprecedented change and uncertainty to dairy producers this spring, and our team's actions over the past few months illustrate our adaptability and responsiveness to the needs of our farmers.

With the arrival of COVID-19, our farmer audience immediately required sound information about the disease and strategies to reduce the risk of an outbreak in order to implement safety measures on their farms. We responded by providing information from trusted sources, including Cornell Ag Workforce Development and the CDC, and interpreting that information specifically for the dairy context. On March 28, we published a blog article titled [Biosecurity for People: 7 Steps to Protect Farm Workers from COVID-19](#). Nearly 700 people have viewed this post, and the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health (NYCAMH) featured it on their website. To reach Hispanic farm workers with this information, Janice used print and email communication tools to share Spanish language resources with farms that employ Spanish speakers.

As our economy began to experience the impacts of COVID, the positive 2020 outlook for the dairy industry quickly reversed itself. The decimation of restaurant sales and dairy exports hit the dairy industry hard, with the USDA All Milk price falling 20% in one month, from \$18.00 per CWT in March to \$14.40 per CWT in April. In April, we began hearing unprecedented reports of milk dumping from farms in our region and CCE educators across the state. In response to the oversupply for milk, Dairy Farmers of America, our region's largest milk co-op, announced a new base excess program. Starting in May, DFA will only pay full price for 85% of the volume of milk that farmers produced in March.

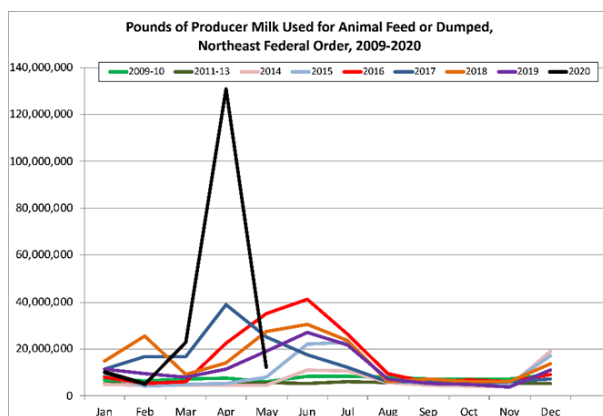
During this time, Mary Kate attended weekly Zoom meetings with a statewide network of farm business management specialists gathering to identify farmer needs and share resources. Donette set up a MailChimp account for the team to streamline our email communications, and we began sharing regular updates on COVID safety, dairy markets, and government policy responses. The whole team coordinated with PRO-DAIRY specialists to share timely resources on everything from managing cash flows during low price cycles to feeding

milk to cows. We fielded calls from some farms interested in selling cattle, and others looking to purchase whole herds to expand their DFA base. We published another COVID blog post on April 7, [From our Team to Yours: COVID-19 Resources for Dairy Farmers](#), which provides a concise annotated list of publications and resources relevant to the dairy industry, including some in Spanish.

The government has enacted a number of different economic relief programs in response to COVID-19, several of which apply to farms. We have used a multifaceted communication approach, including MailChimp, Facebook, the website, the blog, and good old fashioned phone calls, to alert producers to the new state and federal aid programs. We have shared resources developed by other CCE colleagues on the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL), and Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). Mary Kate has provided individual assistance to more than a dozen farms on topics related to PPP, EIDL, employee management, price risk management, value added processing, and other concerns directly related to COVID-19.

As we near the end of June, milk futures have rebounded considerably, suggesting a strong recovery may be in the cards.

However, we still face considerable uncertainty about the path of the virus and the economy going forward. Given the ongoing risks, our team will continue to adapt our communication and programming techniques, explore new technologies, and stay connected with farmers as best we can. No one says it better than Andrew Novakovic, Cornell Professor Emeritus, who thinks *"we've seen the worst of the price drops, which is great, but my guess is that markets will be unsettled for the foreseeable future and that the pandemic is not done playing games with us."*



South Central NY Dairy & Field Crops Team Blog Sees Increased Use and Earns National Recognition

This spring, the importance of our [team blog](#) as a communication tool has become more apparent than ever. Over the past 90 days, 1281 individuals logged 3057 page views. This represents a 61% increase in the number of blog users compared to the same period last year. Since COVID arrived, limitations on travel and face-to-face meetings have inspired other CCE educators to consider blogging. Over the past several months, Mary Kate has consulted with two regional teams about how to create and manage a blog. One of those teams launched their own blog, using ours as a model. Moreover, our team blog earned accolades as a 2020 NACAA Communication Award winner at the New York State and Northeast Region levels, and was selected as a National Finalist in the Web Site category. ■



Onboarding Dairy Farm Employees

Mary Kate MacKenzie, Farm Business Management Specialist

Farmers need accurate information about business performance to make good decisions. We educate and support producers to improve record keeping systems, and we facilitate participation in financial benchmarking programs. Access to financial data helps producers

Possible pull quote or side bar: As a member of the Onboarding Dairy Farm Employees project team, Mary Kate worked closely with four dairy producers in the project's first round. She trained farm managers on onboarding principles and practices, helped each farm develop a customized onboarding process, and supported farms to implement that process with new hires. Along the way, Mary Kate provided technical assistance to help farms implement HR best practices and adapt to agricultural labor law changes. Participating farms made multiple HR management improvements and reported having greater confidence in their ability to provide a systematic and positive onboarding experience to new employees.

More than 25 percent of the U.S. population experiences some type of career transition each year but many transitions are not successful. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, half of all hourly workers leave new jobs in the first four months, and half of senior outside hires fail within 18 months. Clearly, there is room for improvement. A robust employee onboarding program helps new hires adjust to the social and performance aspects of their jobs so they quickly become productive, contributing members of the organization.

The first days and weeks on the job set the course for a new farm employee. However, while employee onboarding has become common in many workplaces, it is still new to farm businesses. To address this human resource management gap in the agricultural industry, the New York Farm Viability Institute funded a two-year Onboarding Dairy Farm Employees project. This statewide project, implemented by Cornell Ag Workforce Development and Cornell Cooperative Extension, focuses on navigating employment requirements and improving general human resource management practices.

As a member of the onboarding project team, Mary Kate worked closely with four dairy farms in Round 1 of the project, from the fall of 2019 through early spring of 2020. She trained farm managers on onboarding principles and practices, helped each farm develop a customized onboarding process, and supported farms to implement that process with new hires. Along the way, Mary Kate provided technical assistance to help farms implement HR best practices and adapt to agricultural labor law changes.

The first round of the onboarding project provided opportunity to develop, test, and improve several key onboarding tools and resources. With input from participating farms, Mary Kate provided feedback to improve the initial version of the Onboarding Template, which is now publically available to

farmers and educators across the state. Mary Kate also took a lead role to develop an interactive multimedia template in Google Classrooms to accompany the written Onboarding Template in Word. Google Classrooms allows farm operators to organize and store digital onboarding materials, including documents, websites, and videos, in a place that is secure and easy to share with new employees.

All four dairy farms from our region that participated in Round 1 of the Onboarding Dairy Farm Employees project achieved the following outcomes:

All four dairy farms from our region that participated in Round 1 of the Onboarding Dairy Farm Employees project achieved the following outcomes:

1. Demonstrated an understanding of the onboarding process and intended outcomes.
2. Developed a custom template to guide onboarding activities with new employees.
3. Improved compliance with agricultural labor regulations.
4. Created or updated written job descriptions.
5. Created or updated employee policies related to housing, time off, recording time worked, and disciplinary processes.
6. Implemented one or more HR management improvements.

The HR improvements that farms achieved through this project varied by farm and reflected each farm's most pressing management priorities. Three farms developed comprehensive employee handbooks, and Mary Kate connected one of those farms with a CALS student intern at the Cornell Farmworker Program to complete a full translation of the handbook into Spanish. Several of the participating farms focused on SOP development. One farm operator, who had recently experienced performance issues and high employee turnover, conducted performance reviews for the first time with assistance and translation provided by the Cornell Farmworker Program.

A successful onboarding process begins with a well-planned orientation, training, and compliance, and leads to improvements that benefit both the manager and employees throughout the relationship. Farms that participated in the onboarding process reported feeling more confident to provide a systematic and positive onboarding experience for employees. In the long term, farms expect to see improved performance, retention, and job satisfaction among employees, and reduced risk associated with human safety and regulatory compliance. In a nod to the innovative nature of the Onboarding Dairy Farm Employees program, Mary Kate received an invitation to present the program and its impacts at the National Extension Risk Management Education Conference in April 2020, before the

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Forage Quality Underpins Dairy Farm Profitability

Janice Degni, CCE Field Crop Specialist

Feed is a significant expense on dairies. In New York, total feed and crop expense accounts for between 40% and 50% of total farm operating expenses, on average. The better the quality of home grown feed from forages, the need for purchased grains to balance diets can be decreased. The team provides focused activities to alert farmer's to the best timing and crop condition to positively impact the quality of both hay crop and corn silage. Recommendations are communicated directly through text, email and our team blog.

The better the quality of home grown feed from forages, the need for purchased feeds like grains to balance diets can be decreased. Feed is a significant expense on dairies. On New York dairies, total feed and crop expense accounts for between 40% and 50% of total farm operating expenses, on average. There is a fairly narrow window for harvesting high quality feed for the first hay crop harvest of the year. Grass crop quality declines more rapidly than alfalfa making timing of harvest critical to support lower feed costs at any level of dairy production. The decline in quality is tied to maturity of the plant's fiber. First cutting yields are the largest for the year. Corn silage can make up from 50-70% of a mature dairy cow's diet. Its quality is greatly affected by the stage of maturity and crop moisture at harvest.

The team provides focused activities to alert farmer's to the best timing and crop condition to positively impact the quality of both hay crop and corn silage which are communicated directly and electronically through calls, texts, emails and our blog. In the spring we monitor alfalfa and grass development by measuring the height of alfalfa on farm with a diversity of soil

type, elevation and field orientation. Our guide was developed from research done by Dr. Jerry Cherney, NYS Extension Forage Scientist, and Dr. Fick who validated this method for predicting timing of cutting for first cutting haycrop.

When corn silage harvest approaches we collaborate with local agri-businesses and agriservice reps to offer corn silage drydown clinics. Farms bring samples of corn stalks from identified fields. We chop the samples and test for dry matter to allow the farms to develop a targeted harvest plan based on individual field's maturity. By harvesting the corn silage crop within the recommended range of crop moisture farms can conserve or gain more energy in their corn crop and reduce or eliminate silage leachate losses which are nutrient rich. In the spring of 2020 we measured alfalfa heights on 80 fields on 37 farms in our region's six counties. In the fall we chopped 44 samples of corn silage stalks from 31 farms impacting the harvest of an estimated 7000 acres.

Research has demonstrated that milk decreases by one pound per day for each day of increase in maturity after pre-bloom and similarly by one pound per day for each 1% increase in alfalfa NDF (neutral detergent fiber) content (Kawas et al., 1991). As the corn ear matures, kernel milk is converted to starch leading to higher dry matter content and increasing the potential energy to be derived from the crop.

Collaboration with local agribusiness; Ward & VanScoy in Owego and Tully Ag Center along with agriservice personnel: John Winchell from Agritech and Sarah Fessenden from Dairy One are integral partners in this effort. ■

(Dairy Farm Onboarding; Continued from page 3)

conference was canceled due to COVID. While she was unable to present at that venue, she and Libby Eiholser will be giving a similar presentation at the PRO-DAIRY Virtual Operations Managers Conference in February 2021.

Looking forward, Round 2 of Onboarding Dairy Farm Employees is about to begin, with several modifications. Participating farms will join educators for a 3-part Onboarding Webinar Series that will introduce the onboarding template and other onboarding tools. The Zoom sessions will provide an opportunity for farms

to begin using and adapting these tools with support from educators. Educators will provide additional follow-up as needed. This approach will combine a virtual cohort model with 1-on-1 support to streamline the process for farms to implement onboarding. We currently have five dairy farms (and one produce farm) from across our region registered for Round 2.

Collaborators with this project included Richard Stup, Director, Cornell Ag Workforce Development Program, Mary Jo Dudley, Director of the Cornell Farmworker Program and supported with funding from the NY Farm Viability Institute. ■

(Dairy Education Transformed; Continued from page 5)

and editing. The culminating paper was submitted to the *Journal of Environmental Management*, and was accepted. Another paper on the research was submitted and accepted as a *Data in Brief* article for the Journal. Future outreach for the project

includes lay articles summarizing key points from the journal manuscript for publication in the newsletter and other dairy publications, aimed at farmers and producers as the audience. ■



Dairy Education Transformed to Accommodate Virtual Settings

Betsy Hicks, Area Dairy Management Specialist

The past year brought many challenges to the dairy program – much of the work involved in our area revolves around troubleshooting on-farm issues, doing hands-on activities and live demonstrations, but many of these activities were not feasible for part of our year. With these challenges, though, the dairy program found ways to stay relevant and in front of our audience by learning new platforms and creating new places for our work to live.

Podcasts

The regional dairy educators along with Cornell PRO-DAIRY first started working on a podcast around the idea of a talk that Betsy was supposed to give when the pandemic first hit. *Dialing into your Best Dairy*, a podcast eight episodes in length was the first effort that the group gave in learning how to record, produce & distribute this new platform. Since that initial work, other podcasts including *Corn Silage Considerations for 2020* and *Troubleshooting Herd Health Issues on your Dairy* have been released on Soundcloud. Our tracks have over 4100 plays since release last April. Keys to success were the collaboration of all regional dairy educators and PRO-DAIRY to create content, record, edit and produce, as well as PRO-DAIRY's contacts through their weekly e-newsletter, the e-leader.

Farm Consultations & Grant Work

Early on in the pandemic, on-farm consultations were out of the question. The need for one-on-one farm troubleshooting, however, did not go away. One topic, grazing, was a focus for discussion and help on a few farms. Teaming up with Troy Bishopp of the Upper Susquehanna Coalition over Zoom with these farms was our answer to working through some of their questions. Over this call, we could bring up maps of their pastures, discuss needs and shortfalls of the current system, and work through options for the upcoming season. One Cortland County farm, as a result of this consult, started a rotational grazing plan in the spring of 2020. At the end of the season, they stated, "We don't know what we would have done this year with the drought if we hadn't started rotating. We are so happy we committed to this plan – cows had ample grazing and we actually made hay on some of the pastures because it worked so well. Thank you!"

As the year progressed, we were able to return to doing farm visits and continue working on grant work. Our NYFVI grant, "Areas of Opportunity & Excellence" resumed and contact with farms included on-farm assessments of cow comfort, transition cows and calf care. Discussion with farms during this visit highlighted changes they could implement right away. A further contact involved a report comparing their assessment with the other farms' assessments and formation of an action plan to work on an area of improvement. This project will wrap up in the Spring of 2021, and outreach may include virtual farm tours

as well as a podcast series highlighting the changes that farms worked to implement to improve.

Programs Go Virtual

Every two to three years, the dairy program offers a Feeder School training – an opportunity for those on the dairy farm whose work is to prepare and feed the dairy herd to learn more about the importance of their role on the dairy. This year, the decision was made to go entirely virtual to offer the program, in collaboration with the other regional dairy specialists and PRO-DAIRY. This program was offered over 2 days, with one week presented in English and one week in Spanish. The week in English saw 185 participants connect over the 2-day program, and the Spanish week saw 84 participants connect. Our reach was aimed at NY dairy farms, but farms from across the US as well as other countries tuned in. Participants were surveyed at the end of each day, and when asked if they were likely to use the information they were presented with during the session, they responded with an average of 8.9 out of 10, with 10 being very likely to use information.

Creating a Living Space for Resources

In the past, we have heard that participants would like to be able to access recordings or materials from meetings but we never had a good place for them to live. Because of programs transitioning to virtual platforms, the Team created a You-Tube page where recordings of presentations can be stored, and learned how to use Box to be a place where participants can locate resources on a particular program or topic. The area teams collaborate to upload videos and share resources so that information is not duplicated, but can be shared via playlists and blog posts.

Articles & Research Publications

Lastly, working remotely gave plenty of time for educators to write on topics that farms could implement after reading. One article written for the digest, entitled, "*Forage Inventory: Have you taken stock of your forage harvest?*" received a lot of attention from farmers, educators and nutritionists alike. A farmer in Onondaga County reached out to Melanie for more information on the topic, and Betsy and Melanie worked with him to better calculate corn silage needs for his dairy, and work to get a better inventory during chopping season. Other regional educators featured the article in their newsletters, and a nutrition company reached out to Betsy for the spreadsheet to help train their employees on forage inventory management.

This period of time also gave a chance for reflection on research. The Engage Cornell grant that grad student Christine Georgakakos and Betsy worked on, Farmer Perspectives of Antibiotic Usage, focused time on reading transcripts of interviews, summarizing common themes, and lots of writing

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The Journey from Apprentice to Journey Worker

A. Fay Benson, Area Small Farms Specialist

The Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program has been a project overseen by Fay Benson for the past four years. It is the only approved apprenticeship program approved by the Department of Labor for agriculture. This past year, we had the first two apprentices graduate to "Journey Worker" status. The requirements for graduation is to complete 3700 hours of on the job training under an approved Master Dairy Grazier, participate in 300 hours of related education, most of which is online. This story explains all the pieces of training and interaction between the apprentice, master grazier, and state education coordinator, to complete the journey.

Grazing dairies have been common in the Great Lakes region since the 1980's. Even though grazing was part of dairy farming in the United States for hundreds of years, it was work in the 1950's by the French biochemist and farmer, Andre Voisin, who defined the practice of "Rotational Grazing" which has made this management style so beneficial to grazing dairies of today. There was a rapid adoption of rotational grazing by smaller dairies in New York and other areas in the 1980's and 1990's. In a study by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in 1992, fifteen percent of Pennsylvania's dairies were grazing dairies. Similar rates applied to New York, and even higher rates in Wisconsin.

Rotational grazing fits best on farms which averaged 400 acres with 100 cows. Some dairy farms grew larger to take the advantage of the economics of scale. The efficiency caused a stagnation of dairy prices which was felt hardest by smaller dairies, causing many to go out of business. In the late 1990's and 2000's there was, and still is, a growing demand from consumers for certified organic milk. To be certified, a dairy is required to graze their animals when possible. A premium is paid for this milk which has allowed many grazing dairies to remain viable. The practice of rotational grazing is also the best use of some of the land in the Great Lakes region. The permanent soil cover helps protect highly erodible land and less productive soils which deteriorate when tilled for corn, a mainstay of large confinement dairy herds. By providing education on rotational grazing to current and future farmers, additional land in areas of New York can remain productive and provide income to the farmers and the communities where they live.

Universities across the Great Lakes region identified the economic efficiencies of larger dairies. This caused universities and colleges to focus their research and extension on larger dairy management styles. The rationalization for this was captured in the Cornell Department of Agriculture and Economics' White Paper released in 2003, "Future Structure of the Dairy Industry: Historical Trends, Projections and Issues". The focus by universities and colleges to do research and teach; large confinement style of dairying, left few education and research resources for grazing dairies. County extension personnel relied on farmer to farmer teaching and "pasture walks" as a way to provide education and research results to their farmers who found grazing as a viable way to farm. It was harder to train new farmers on how to manage a grazing dairy since most colleges and universities focused their curriculums on the

confinement style of dairying. In 2013, the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA) was established by the Wisconsin Grass Farmers. DGA is an innovative 501c3 non-profit organization that partners with established grazing dairy farmers, universities, community based organizations, and other stakeholders to deliver high quality work-based training in managed-grazing dairy production in multiple states. DGA is the only official apprenticeship for agriculture in the United States. Fay Benson began working with the National DGA program in 2016 and has been through multiple trainings in other states to become the Education Coordinator in New York. More information about DGA can be found at: <https://www.dga-national.org/>

Since 2016, the New York DGA program has grown slowly as Master Graziers are identified and evaluated by Benson. Their evaluations are sent to the national committee for review to assure that their farms can provide safe and beneficial training to a new dairy grazier. There are currently 17 approved master dairy graziers in New York. We have had 12 apprentices start an apprenticeship, four who are currently apprenticing on a dairy and two that have graduated. The roughly 50% completion rate of apprentices who stay with the program is comparable to other apprenticeships such as electricians, bricklayers, etc. The support for the new apprentice by the Education Coordinator includes:

- Monthly farm visits for the first six months and bi-monthly visits afterwards.
- Tracking the apprentice's progress through the "Job Book" which is the curriculum developed by the DGA program and approved by the US Department of Labor.
- Review of the "Related Learning" required by the program. This includes 288 hours of online courses provided by DGA's Managed Grazing Innovation Center. It includes courses in Dairy Cattle Nutrition, Feeds & Feeding, Milk Quality, Dairy Cattle Health & Wellness, Soil & Water Resources Management, Farm Financial Management, and Managed Grazing Systems for Dairy Cattle.

In addition to the related instruction, apprentices are required to attend local education opportunities connected to operating a grazing dairy. These are recorded by the Education Coordinator.

With the graduation of our first two Journey Workers, the New York DGA program seems to be on firm ground. The graduates have chosen different paths. One has chosen to attend graduate school at Syracuse University and study "Food Policy". The other graduate will stay on at the Master's farm and as with other apprenticeships will help train the next apprentice brought on by the farm. We plan on graduating two more apprentices in the coming year. One of these has started her own grazing dairy and the other will continue the transition to ownership of the family's dairy. The DGA program has provided education resources to an underserved population in New York allowing for another generation to add diversity to New York's dairy industry.

A heart-felt thank you for the role of the team on one of our farm families.

Shared on Facebook September 16, 2020 by Tioga County resident Kate Whittemore of Candor, New York.

"Sometimes we forget to thank those that have had a big impact on our lives. Family and friends are often overlooked, but there are others that are frequently forgotten too. I never grew up involved in 4-H or other Cornell Cooperative Extension programs, but in 2004, during my senior year of college, I was introduced to extension. At that time, I didn't know we would become dairy farmers, I just knew I was taking some ag classes at Cornell because I enjoyed them as an offset to my sociology and business classes and I enjoyed coming home to help Ben move fence on the weekends to rotationally graze his small beef herd. I began to understand the many branches of CCE that are meant to mirror the research arms of Cornell's Land Grant University.

In 2008, when we started milking cows, a fellow farmer introduced us to the South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops team (a part of CCE) and our careers as farmers were impacted for the better ever since. This team of uniquely qualified individuals has pushed us (Ben mostly because he's pig-headed) to strive for better always. From guiding us on grazing, nutrition, facility improvements, grant programs, conservation practices and business management, plus being our first call whenever we feel overwhelmed by whatever curve ball life throws, this team has spent thousands of hours coaching us, crying with us and supporting us in any way they can, personally and professionally. I'm sorry this is long and most of the folks on this team aren't on Facebook to even see this, but I just want our community to know how much the SCNY Dairy and Field Crops team and some of their other co-workers at

the local extension do for our community. A community with a foundation of agriculture. That foundation of agriculture has changed and CCE has continued to change along with it, new faces, new goals, varying services, but always trying to be the connector within the community to bring different people and services to the table.

Mary Kate Wheeler, a newer member of the team, but an integral part of our farm. Mary Kate works closely with her supervisor and the field crop specialist, Janice Degni, someone who has pushed Ben to set goals and Janice loses more sleep than he does about those goals. Betsy Hicks, another amazing team member, has steered us to many other industry experts to help us care for our cows more effectively and she pushed us to create an advisory team several years ago which was a huge help. Fay Benson is the grazing specialist and has helped us learn and network with other farms, both grazing and in the organic crops world. All of these fine folks have connected us with Soil and Water, FSA/USDA, Pro-Dairy or FarmNet, plus private service providers and other farmers whenever they recognize a need on our farm or a service we might not be aware of. We are actively trying to sell our cows, it's a heartbreaking decision, but the thought of not interacting with these amazing individuals is almost as heartbreaking for me as not having a herd of dairy cows. Thank you to the SCNY team and Extension (Barb Neal, Melissa Watkins, and some other amazing ladies)! And thank you to Andy G. Fagan, who retired a few months ago, and introduced me to extension with enthusiasm!" ■



Newly Formed Automated Milking Systems Discussion Group *Betsy Hicks, Area Dairy Management Specialist*

A discussion group focused around Automated Milking Systems (AMS) formed in SCNY helps foster discussion focused on challenges unique to robotic dairy farms.

With more producers transitioning to robotic milking systems, farms that use this technology have challenges unique to their production system. A range of farms in size, experience and number of robots need a platform to discuss best practices for their business.

Along with Margaret Quaassdorff of CCE NWNy team, we hosted two separate night meetings as the start to our discussion group. The first meeting focused on milk quality and

management, and the second focused on daily tasks and efficiency.

The Automated Milking System Discussion Group brought together eight different farms, some from over an hour away, at each in-person meeting. Producers that utilize this technology are faced with unique challenges, which makes learning from peers so valuable and rewarding for those that participate. Discussion lasted long beyond the allotted time for each meeting. Future meetings, postponed by COVID, will resume in the winter season. ■

Team Event Coverage/Contributions in the Ag Press

Country Folks

**PROGRESSIVE
DAIRYMAN**

HOARD'S DAIRYMAN

**Lancaster
Farming**
THE FARMER'S CHOICE

A closer look: Industrial hemp

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAPdFZcDIP0>

A tale of two barns

<https://hoards.com/article-28739-a-tale-of-two-barns.html>

Biosecurity for People: 7 Steps to Protect Farm Workers from COVID-19

<https://www.nycamh.org/covid-19/updates.php?id=811>

Building Resilience in Your Forage Production

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmD_NjdOXjI&feature=youtu.be)

[v=GmD_NjdOXjI&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmD_NjdOXjI&feature=youtu.be)

Consider contract grazing dairy heifers for feed savings, freeing up space on the farm

<https://www.progressivedairy.com/topics/management/>

[consider-contract-grazing-dairy-heifers-for-feed-savings-freeing-up-space-on-the-farm](https://www.progressivedairy.com/topics/management/consider-contract-grazing-dairy-heifers-for-feed-savings-freeing-up-space-on-the-farm)

Consider heifer size in housing design

[https://hoards.com/article-28259-consider-heifer-size-in-](https://hoards.com/article-28259-consider-heifer-size-in-housing-design.html)

[housing-design.html](https://hoards.com/article-28259-consider-heifer-size-in-housing-design.html)

Heifer inventory is a delicate balance

<https://hoards.com/article-28273-heifer-inventory-is-a-delicate-balance.html>

Hemp Production in New York State

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzKc7svA8eo>

Identifying Risk is the First Step to Managing It

<https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/2020/07/identifying-risk-is-the-first-step-to-managing-it/>

In mixed pens, first lactation cow's struggle

<https://hoards.com/article-28422-in-mixed-pens-first-lactation-cows-struggle.html>

Know your calves to catch illnesses early

<https://hoards.com/article-29385-know-your-calves-to-catch-illnesses-early.html>

Linking dollars to dairy grazing decisions

<https://countryfolks.com/linking-dollars-to-dairy-grazing-decisions/>

Narrow down the cause of calf scours

<https://hoards.com/article-29260-narrow-down-the-cause-of-calf-scours.html>

Rate Your Recordkeeping System

<https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/2020/01/rate-your-recordkeeping-system/>

There's only so much time in a cow's day

<https://hoards.com/article-28392-theres-only-so-much-time-in-a-cows-day.html>

SCNY Dairy & Field Crops Extension Program

The South Central NY Dairy & Field Crops Program provides educational opportunities and technical assistance to help the industry with emerging issues, production bottlenecks, and new technologies. Our primary audiences are dairy and field crop producers as well as agri-service providers with secondary audiences of the media, non-farm residents and consumers. We focus on areas that will help improve farm profitability within the region since farm financial success is a key to maintaining a viable dairy and field crops industry. Our program's education helps our industry respond to both internal and external forces that help it keep pace in a rapidly changing world.

Our Mission:

Enhance the profitability of farmers to maintain a strong regional dairy industry

Create greater awareness of trends and options to help producers achieve family and business goals

Maintain environmentally responsible agricultural practices

Encourage a better understanding of agriculture by the general community

SCNY Dairy & Field Crops Extension Program