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CORNELL NWNY PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
JANUARY – MARCH 2013

Winter Dairy Management Workshop

Jackson Wright discusses Long-day photoperiod and LED lighting at the 2013 Winter Dairy Management workshop in Mt. Morris

The NWNY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops team held the Winter Dairy Management program in Mt. Morris. Topics focused on new technologies capable of increasing dairy farm profitability, including, Is Your Reproduction Program the Most Profitable Alternative; Dairy Modernization - Five Factors Affecting Profitability to Consider; LED Lighting: Field Research Results; Optimal Forage Preservation and Value; and Optimizing Cow Comfort throughout the Barn. Thirty farmers representing over 12,000 cows attended the program. Program participants were surveyed on what changes they were likely to make. Responses included, "I will immediately start benchmarking my reproduction program"; "Start a profit team"; "Look into lighting opportunities and savings"; "Refocus on bunk management and consider shredlage"; and "Increase cow comfort and maybe long day lighting to improve milk sold per cow". One participant even responded "I wish that the rest of my family could have come".

Winter Triticale in North West New York

Winter Triticale Nitrogen Rate Trial Set-Up

With the feed shortages of 2012 and the rising costs of land, many NWNY farmers have planted winter triticale to harvest as silage. Optimizing nitrogen fertility has been shown to increase yields from 2 to 4 tons dry matter per acre. In response, a research trial has been established using 15 on-farm sites in Orleans, Genesee, Wyoming, Livingston, Yates, and Ontario counties following a variety of crops in rotation. Current estimates put the winter triticale acreage in western New York around 5,000 acres. About 2,000 acres have little or no nitrogen applied, while the other 3,000 have ≥100 lb/acre of nitrogen applied to them. Hay and haylage prices are approximately $300/ton dry matter and nitrogen averages $0.60/lb across the region. Through this trial and other efforts (Ag Focus articles, emails, & phone conversations) farmers have the potential to gain $1.2 million worth of silage and save $36,000 in nitrogen fertilizer costs.

Intensive Wheat Management Pays Big Dividends

Peter Johnson at the Soybean and Small Grains Congress

The NWNY Team has been working with wheat producers and promoting a high management system to increase yields. At our annual Soybean and Small Grains Congresses we brought in guest speaker Peter Johnson, Provincial Cereal Specialist, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture. A record 400 producers and industry representatives attended these events. Peter shared his 28 years of wheat research with the group and showed how his cutting edge research has helped Ontario boost their provincial winter wheat average 20 bushels above NY's.

Peter's dynamic presentation and research results generated quite the buzz across western NY. With the increased wheat acreage and favorable wheat prices in 2013 many producers and industry representatives have contacted us about converting to a high management wheat system this year. One producer is converting all 600 acres of his wheat to this system. If he increases his wheat yields by a minimum of 20 bushels per acre, he will gain an additional $90,000 at harvest.

Dairy Skills Training - Calf Care Management

Calf raising is an important part of the management of any dairy farm. Workers in this area often lack formalized training and background education in monitoring and caring for these animals. The team partnered with the Wyoming County Dairy Institute, Alfred State College and private consultants to offer 10 hours of lecture and 6 hours of hands-on activities on the subject. Recordkeeping, nutrition, physical exam, stress limiting handling, colostrum management, dehorning, environmental assessment and sanitation were some of the topic areas. Eight attended; two participants gained college credit through enrollment. Testing was implemented in conjunction with each session to determine teaching effectiveness. Recording of the classroom sessions and most of the demonstrations was part of an ongoing effort to archive the series of skills trainings for future access.

Dr. Dorothea Fitzsimmons, of Alfred State (holding halter) & Dr. Jerry Bertoldo with stethoscope give demonstration on giving calf a physical exam

Schrader Farms Meat Market Tour

Keith Schrader saw a need for a USDA facility for their livestock processing and their neighbors as the local foods movement gears up. USDA processing of meat allows for retail sales of cuts of meat. Keith turned to JR Westervelt, an experienced meat cutter. The two put their heads together and built a USDA market in Romulus, Seneca County. They opened their doors August 23, 2012.

A producer voiced interest in visiting the facility so a tour was organized for a Saturday afternoon in February. Approximately 20 producers from the region visited the new operation and toured the facility, from the holding pens to the freezer to the retail area.

The owners and staff at Shrader Farms Market talk about the facility to tour participants

Tour participants have begun utilizing the facility to meet their processing needs. With the USDA inspection, producers may sell their meat by the retail cuts to consumers, restaurants, farmers markets and at their farm stores. To further meet the needs of producers, the facility was recently certified as Animal Welfare Approved, the first facility in the state.

Economics of Grazed vs. Stored Feed – Analysis for Decision Making

During an afternoon break out session during the Step It Up in 2013 Winter Grazing Conference, about fifteen participants learned that partial budgeting is a valuable tool for decision making. For a grazing dairy farm, expected changes in profit associated with mid-April nitrogen fertilizer applications are dependent upon the extent to which the producer can convert increased forage availability attributed to additional units of nitrogen into reduced total mixed ration (TMR) purchases. Expected changes in profit are sensitive to expected reductions in TMR purchased, TMR price, nitrogen needed, and price of nitrogen, suggesting that producers develop analyses specific to the farm business.

Studies of farm financial management practices suggest that farm business owners that apply profitability analysis when examining possible changes to the farm business achieve greater levels of profit compared to the group that does not apply profitability analysis.

John Hanchar discusses the economics of early N application with a conference attendee