



Cornell Cooperative Extension North Country Regional Ag Team

The North Country Regional Ag Team is a Cornell Cooperative Extension partnership between Cornell University and the CCE Associations in Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton, and Essex counties.

Quarterly Report

October -
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2022

Dairy Feeder School Has Positive Impact on English and Spanish Workers

Producers in the North Country have increasingly indicated a need for hands-on educational programs geared toward workers on their farms. The two most expensive costs on dairy farms are hired labor and feed costs, making the role of feeding a critical job. Programing designed to help farms improve feed management and feeding best practices can lead to improvements in cow health, productivity, and the overall bottom line.

As a collaboration across the state, CCE Dairy Specialists and Cornell PRO-DAIRY developed an in-person one-day Dairy Feeder School program. For the first time in at least 7 years, CCE NCRAT offered this in-person program in both English and Spanish. The program was offered at one North Country location in the Fall, and again in Vermont in January (with producers from NNY coming over). The program included lecture-style presentations in the morning and demonstrations in the barn after lunch. Topics included the economic importance of the feeder, dry matter calculations, diet consistency, troubleshooting a mixer wagon, and bunker management and safety.

This was one of the first in-person programs CCE NCRAT offered on-farm since COVID restrictions have eased, and the turnout and discussion were very good. There were 20 attendees (6 Spanish and 14 English), representing several farms and over 11,000 cows from 3 counties across the North Country. Overall, the program was a success with most attendees rating the program as a 4/5 (1=poor, 5=excellent). Producers voiced their excitement about the program being offered in Spanish and in-person. Also, several attendees indicated they left the program with a better understanding of the importance of making changes to dry matter and how to adjust the dry matter of the feed day to day. This program addressed a need in the North Country for more in-person demonstration style programs for farmers and farm workers in both English and Spanish, and the CCE NCRAT team helped deliver it through a strong collaboration with PRO-DAIRY and other CCE Dairy Specialists.

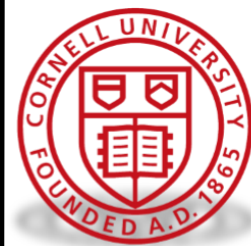
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Photo credit: L. Ferlito.

New Climate Smart Farming and Forestry Grant Will Directly Support New York State Farms Progress Toward Climate Targets



Cornell University Cooperative Extension has partnered with the NYS DEC, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, and a dozen other public and private organizations to help farmers and private forest owners transition to climate-smart production practices through a \$2.8 billion USDA grant program. These funds will directly support NYS's aggressive commitment to slash greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions set out in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) of 2019 as well as several ag and food industry-driven initiatives, such as Dairy Net Zero. CCE's administration, the CCE North Country Regional Ag Team, and the Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Regional Team contributed to this large collaborative grant-writing effort that resulted in an award of \$60 million from the USDA's 'Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities' program. This first round of USDA funding was announced in September 2022, awarding 70 projects out of more than 450 proposals nationally.

Operational details and priorities are still being negotiated for this NYS award, but the funds are expected to flow through NYS Ag and Markets and county Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) offices across the state, through their Agricultural Environmental Management system, much like other federal incentive programs. These federal dollars are expected to directly fund multiple farm and forest management practices to that reduce methane and other GHG emissions, measurement of the impacts of those practices, and assistance to companies for development of demand for climate-smart commodities and products. Specific farming and forestry practices to be subsidized are not yet known, but this USDA program would likely incentivize management practices shown to reduce GHG emissions and/or increase carbon sequestration in soils and trees - such as planting trees, eliminating tillage, using cover crops, capturing manure pit gases, or reformulating animal diets.

Additional details and specific incentives should be announced over the next several months, through NYS Ag and Markets and SWCD systems.



Winter rye cover crop growing in corn stubble. Photo credit: Edwin Remsberg and USDA-SARE.



Lameness Discussion Group Brings Producers Together Across NY

Dairy farms repeatedly indicate they like learning from each other and want to hear what other farms are doing. A major animal welfare, productivity, and profitability issue on North Country dairy farms is lameness. The average prevalence of lameness on US dairies is about 25%, and each individual case of lameness costs an average of \$200-500, making it a very costly issue for farms. To address this need, the CCE NCRAT Dairy Specialist partnered with the CCE SCNY Dairy Specialist to secure Cornell Dairy Advancement Program funding to run a peer to peer discussion group focusing on lameness prevalence and the economics of lameness on a handful of farms.

Nine dairies, ranging from 90 to 750 cows, from the North Country and the South Central region participated in the discussion group, which started with a virtual meeting. Then CCE Dairy Specialists conducted an initial farm assessment including locomotion scoring the whole lactating herd, followed by a reassessment about 3 months later. Additionally, economic data was collected to calculate the costs associated with managing and treating lameness on each farm. Farms were provided with a report including their individual data and how they compare to the other farms for lameness prevalence and economic data (Table 1). In the Fall, the farmers and the Dairy Specialists had the final virtual discussion group to go over the complete dataset and share ideas.

| Farm | Total Lameness Cost | |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| | Cost/lact cow | Cost/cwt |
| Benchmark | \$6.30 | \$0.27 |
| Farm 1 | \$7.74 | \$0.32 |
| Farm 2 | \$7.70 | \$0.31 |
| Farm 3 | \$6.07 | \$0.30 |
| Farm 4 | \$6.88 | \$0.31 |
| Farm 5 | \$7.10 | \$0.32 |
| Farm 6 | \$7.71 | \$0.31 |
| Farm 7 | \$2.13 | \$0.11 |
| Farm 8 | \$6.51 | \$0.26 |
| Farm 9 | \$4.89 | \$0.23 |

Table 1. The cost of lameness per lactating cow and per hundredweight for the 9-herd benchmark..

This project generated good discussion amongst the farms.

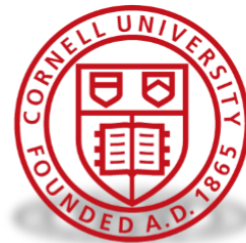
When asked what they found most valuable attendees said, "locomotion scoring"; "it was valuable to hear others management practices and compare it to their lameness scores. I also learned of a new foot bath product to use which will be better for my soils and make me feel better about doing more foot baths each week because I won't be adding heavy metals to my manure slurry."; and "I Liked the discussion we got into during the last Zoom meeting". When asked what changes they hope to make to address lameness, one farm said they want to increase the manure scraping frequency from 2/d to 3/d, make stalls larger to increase use and reduce perching, and consider a new footbath product; and another farm wants to improve bedding.



Photo credit: L. Ferlito.

This project helped North Country farms better understand lameness on their farm. By reducing lameness by even just a 1-2% per farm, the cost savings would be well over \$1000 per farm. In addition to impacting the participating herds, this project had a larger reach as it has been reported on at Cornell In-Service this Fall, a presentation for farmers at the British Columbia Dairy Association, and there will be articles published in CCE Newsletters and The Manager and Progressive Dairy this spring.

Herbicide Resistant Management Increases Farm Net Income



Herbicide resistant weeds are becoming increasingly problematic for corn and soybean growers across New York State. Managing herbicide resistant weeds can result in higher weed control costs, but with better weed control, improved yields, and increased net farm income. The losses related to herbicide resistant weeds have a large negative economic impact on local farms as there are approximately 15,000 acres of soybeans grown in the North Country region where herbicide resistance can cause more loss. It has been estimated that herbicide resistant marestail (confirmed in 5 of the 6 counties in NNY) is present on 5% of all field crop acres. Resistant marestail would cause an annual monetary loss of \$275,000 in NNY if soybean growers did not adjust their weed management program to control this troublesome weed. With changes in management practices these losses could be reduced to just \$40,000.

CCE North Country Regional Ag Team Field Crop Specialists are committed to remain proactive in their educational outreach to growers and continue to maintain vigilance in detecting and identifying resistant weed populations that are rapidly expanding in the North County. CCE NCRAT's efforts to address herbicide resistant weed management has included on-farm research trials and demonstrations, articles, grower meetings, and field days.

Since 2019, these efforts have included:

- Five on-farm herbicide trials targeting multiple resistant marestail and two more planned in 2023
- Writing or co-authoring 27 extension articles about herbicide resistance management, including the upcoming March 2023 Progressive Dairy quarterly insert "The Manager" from PRO-DAIRY
- Giving 57 in person and virtual herbicide resistant management presentations throughout New York State, with 13 more scheduled in early 2023
- On-farm demonstrations of importing weed seeds in a used combine purchased from out of state, with more planned for 2023



Photo credit: M. Hunter.

These continuous efforts have heightened the awareness of growers, crop consultants, and agribusinesses to closely monitor fields for the presence of herbicide resistant weed species, such as, marestail, tall waterhemp, and Palmer amaranth. Our on-farm research trials have provided sound research-based information needed to make informed management decisions. Delivering the most accurate information about herbicide resistant weed species will increase the likelihood that proper management tactics will be used to control these weeds and ultimately increase net farm income.

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/>

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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.