



Cornell Cooperative Extension

South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Program

THIRD QUARTER HIGHLIGHTS

JULY—SEPT 2023



What Value Does Your Regional Dairy and Field Crops Team Bring to its Stakeholders? *Janice Degni, CCE Field Crop Specialist*

Knowledge and expertise: CCE Regional Ag Team specialists are professionals who possess extensive expertise in various agricultural areas, including dairy herd and business management, and crop production. Extension specialists regularly update on the latest research and best practices, providing farmers with accurate and reliable information.

Educational Programs and Workshops: Specialists organize educational programs, workshops, and training sessions tailored to the needs of local farmers and agricultural professionals. These programs cover a wide range of topics from sustainability to business management to emerging trends. Participants gain knowledge and new skills that can improve their farming practices and management.

Problem-solving and Troubleshooting: The team offers on-site farm visits and consultations to help identify and address specific challenges they may be facing. They assist in troubleshooting issues related to compliance and regulation, pest

infestations, nutrient management, and others. Their expertise can save farmers time, money, and resources by providing practical solutions and guidance.

Research and Innovation: CCE Regional Ag Teams collaborate with Cornell faculty, staff, and graduate students to conduct applied research and evaluate new farming techniques or technologies. This enables them to offer farmers evidence-based recommendations and insights into practices that can enhance productivity, sustainability, and profitability.

Networking and Collaboration: Regional teams are connected to producers and a broader network of agricultural professionals, researchers, and industry stakeholders. This facilitates collaboration and knowledge-sharing among farmers, allowing them to learn from one

another's experiences, share successes, and collectively address common challenges.

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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.

Our mission is to 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, and encourage a better understanding of agriculture by the general community. We work to help producers meet their goals and enhance dairy farm profitability to maintain a strong dairy industry in the region.



Building Agricultural Awareness for Youth and the General Public

Janice Degni and Betsy Hicks

Supporting and building a better understanding of agriculture in the local communities is part of our mission. Few people have a direct or even indirect connection to agriculture today with less than 1.5% of the US population directly engaged in the production of agricultural products. We believe that it is imperative that people understand where their food comes from as well as the many additional benefits that farms provide for their community. This belief leads us to team up with County CCE Associations and industry stakeholders to give opportunities to learn about farming and showcase the importance in our community. The ag awareness events that we participate in include focused events for students and open houses held on farms for the general public.



Sundaes on the Farm is an annual event that features a dairy farm open house in Tioga County. The team participates by having an educational station on the farm. This year we featured a display of common field crops, forages, and grains fed to

cows on the farm and we made butter with over 200 people. It's a magical moment when the heavy cream transforms into a ball of butter after several minutes of dedicated shaking. While the shaking is happening, we can explain the connections between the crops and feed, the dairy cow, and her production of milk and cream that we use to make butter. We repeated this scenario at the Broome and Tioga County fairs as well as provided informational displays addressing dairy sustainability and products derived from cows.



Local county fairs are a large part of our team's efforts for public

awareness of agriculture. Being present for dairy shows in each county is a great opportunity to talk with youth and parents in the county, as well as dairy farmers exhibiting animals or there to watch the show. Betsy and Janice had presence at Cortland, Broome, Tioga, Chemung and Cayuga fairs this year – talking

with participants, helping clean up ringside, handing out awards and pitching in wherever necessary.

Betsy and Janice also have a presence at the **State Fair**. Janice judges the field crop entries that are displayed in the Horticulture building. It's a great opportunity to highlight the importance of field crops across the state with the many thousands of visitors that pass through the building. Betsy dedicates time at the Dairy Cattle Birthing Center, put on by NY Animal Agriculture Coalition, where the public can watch a dairy cow give birth. Several hundred, some days even over a thousand, people can walk through the Birthing Tent. When a cow is giving birth, the conversations had with the people watching can be so rewarding, as people come to understand the care that dairy farmers give to cows and calves alike.

This year Janice organized Agstravaganza, an annual event for Cortland 4th grade students from school districts across the county. The event features around 14 different ag-based stations where students learn about production from apples to field crops, animals from dairy and beef to goats, and other diverse topics like pollinators and compost. Another event held for Cortland County 5th grade students, a visit to EZ Acres dairy farm, also features several stations that teach about different areas on dairies, including foot trimming, feed, youngstock care, cow comfort and manure management. These two events are annual offerings that Janice and Betsy are always excited to take part in. Unfortunately, both events were cancelled because of unsafe air conditions from the Canadian wildfire.

The Chemung County Ag Promotion Committee organized **Old MacDonald's Farm**, an ag awareness event also for young children. Janice and her summer interns, Gretchen and Lexi enjoyed helping the children make butter and their excitement to taste it. Afterward, they ran relays where they selected pictures of the steps in the process of making butter.



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Pasture Management Education

Betsy Hicks and Janice Degni,



Houston farms shared how they manage their rotational grazing system to supplement their dairy ration. In contrast to Weller Farms, Houston Farms does not supply 100% of their diet with pasture. The farm's nutritionist was able to explain how they adjust the diet through the grazing season in order to achieve the farm's goals for production. The farm also explained the many conservation practices that they have adopted over the years and their

Pasture and grazing management education promotes a sustainable livestock feeding strategy for dairy and livestock farms alike. Recommending and demonstrating best management practices works to optimize feed yield and quality for grazing livestock, while offering both environmental and economic benefits for the farm. A key goal of our education centers on helping producers how to manage their pasture effectively with attention to stocking rates and rest periods which leads to healthier pastures, increased forage availability and reduced over grazing. The benefits of improved pasture management can lead to improved animal health and increased weight gain or sustained milk production using low-cost pasture forage.

Two pasture walks this summer brought farmers together to share their experiences and learn from the host graziers while walking through their pasture systems and observing the pasture regrowth and animals grazing. Weller Farms hosted a pasture walk highlighting the expansion of their grazing system with high tensile fencing and waterings systems. Greg shared his management practices for managing his beef herd on pasture. He explained the roles of the Cayuga county soil and water conservation district (SWCD) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) who worked together to provide the technical and funding support for the project. Agency staff were available at the meeting to answer questions about accessing grant funding and technical support.

contribution to improved cattle health and productivity, labor efficiency and quality of life for the farm. The conservation practices include reduced tillage cropping systems, cover crops, a covered barnyard connecting the freestall barn to the milking parlor and above ground manure storage. These practices provided benefits that extended beyond the farmstead through improved soil health and environmental benefits in the Owasco Lake Watershed.

Pasture education empowers farmers with the tools and knowledge they need to optimize their operations and contribute to farm sustainability while practicing environmental stewardship. Participants of these pasture walks were able to learn about how to employ different strategies for incorporating grazing, how to get resources for design of pasture systems, and access funding streams for fencing, water systems and manure storage with local agencies. Touring real life examples and having on-site conversations with fellow farmers and technical support staff offers a unique perspective for farmers looking to make changes and improvements on their farm.



(Team Value; Continued from page 1)



Access to Grants and Funding Opportunities: CCE Regional specialists often have knowledge about grant programs and funding opportunities available to support farmers and agricultural initiatives. They can provide guidance on eligibility criteria, and application processes to help farmers access financial resources to implement projects, adopt new technologies, or improve their farm operations.

Localized Support: Regional specialists have a good understanding of the local agricultural landscape, including the climate, soil conditions, market demands,

and regulatory requirements specific to their region. This localized support enables them to provide tailored advice and assistance that aligns with the unique needs and characteristics of the local farming community. They also collaborate with the county association ag staff.

Community Engagement: Regional specialists actively engage with the local community, promoting agriculture, and fostering connections between farmers and consumers. They participate in educational programs for students, and other outreach activities to raise awareness about the importance of agriculture for the community.



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Touring an operating dairy farm is a huge opportunity for anyone who wants to learn more about dairy to ask questions of the dairy farmer themselves. Lawton's Jersey Farm in Tioga County has invited Newark Valley FFA for the past two years to come to their dairy and learn about what they do. Betsy has helped lead the tour of students both years, talking about calf care, barn ventilation, feed and more. Lawton's end the tour with ice cream sundaes, a sweet treat after learning how they produce milk on their dairy.

Chemung County also provided an opportunity for 4-H youth and parents to learn about animal agriculture. Betsy brought the Calving Model to the fairgrounds and demonstrated the way a calf is normally born. Youth were able to see inside the model cow, learn about proper technique if a calf needs help being born, and help the model calf be born. Parents were

able to correct the presentation of the model calf that needed help and ask questions about taking care of calves at birth. This model is able to be reserved with Betsy for other youth events, as well as beef or dairy events in the region's counties.

When we talk to the public about agriculture, we help them understand that agriculture is the foundation of our food system and help them make connections to where their food comes from i.e., not the grocery store. We explain how farmers practice environmental stewardship and their contributions to the local economy. Growing agriculture awareness by the general public leads to an understanding of the vital role agriculture has for our society and a better understanding of the value of farms in our communities.

