Cornell Cooperative Extension | Northwest NY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Program

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

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS October - December 2023

Beef Quality Assurance Training Provides Needed Information

Beef Quality Assurance trainings provide a learning opportunity for beef producers. It is a national voluntary program that was developed based on scientific research covering topic areas: behavior and handling; biosecurity; herd health and products; euthanasia; recordkeeping and more. For certification, New York requires attending a classroom presentation or self-study and test plus a chute side training where participants are required to demonstrate how to give a proper injection. Recertification is needed every three years by attending an hour-long educational event covering a health topic. The chute side portion is often assisted by a veterinarian, critical support for providing updated regulations and industry changes regarding antibiotics and other pharmaceutical use. Certification is also a required component for the NY Grown and Certified program for beef.

A training was recently held in Wyoming County to certify and recertify 15 producers. These venues provide a great learning environment that goes beyond the requirements. Discussion outside the confines of the training is beneficial as well. Comments from participants stressed the importance of adequate handling equipment for both producer and animal welfare, safe handling and proper use of vaccines, and the importance of biosecurity. The host shared that he received grant funds through the John May Safety Fund, which provided matching funds to purchase a cattle handling system. A participant was in the process of making a similar purchase, went home and applied, and is waiting to get his reimbursement of $5,000.

A veterinarian demonstrates giving a proper injection. Photo Credit: Nancy Glazier

NWNY Grower Wins Both the NY Corn and Soybean Yield Contests

Dates Farm wins both NY Corn & Soybean yield contests. Photo: Katie Becker Photography

The NWNY Team supervises the annual Corn & Soybean Yield Contests sponsored by the NY Corn and Soybean Growers Association. Each year there are around 100 entries in each contest. There are cash prizes for the top three corn and soybean yields in the state and plaques for the top place winners in each of five designated regions (West, Finger Lakes, Central, North and East). The team has the privilege of emceeing the awards ceremony each year. It is a great opportunity to promote corn and soybean production in our region and NY.

In 2023, growers from the NWNY region made us proud and took the top three places in the corn and soybean contests. For the first time ever, a grower won both yield contests. Jake Dates from Red Creek in Wayne County was the corn champion (290.49 bu/a) and soybean champion (83.79 bu/a). For the corn contest, Jeff Bridge from Elba, Genesee County, was second place at 272.47 bushels and Ben Austic from Interlaken, Seneca County, came in third at 271.31 bushels. The soybean contest was a close one. Bobby Thompson from Interlaken, Seneca County, took second place with 82.80 bushels per acre and Ron and David Blodgett from Lima, Livingston County, took third with 81.39 bushels.

The yield contests are an opportunity for farms to push their practices to the limits, experiment a little, learn a little and enjoy some friendly competition and bragging rights at the coffee shop. If you would like to see all the WNY and Finger Lakes regional winners from our area, check out the results on the NYC&SGA webpage (https://www.nycornsoy.org/yield-contests).

Evaluating Benefits, and Costs of Soil Health Systems Adoption on Farms in the Genesee River Watershed in WNY

During the fourth quarter of 2023, the NWNY Team Completed a Roughly Two Year Project Led by American Farmland Trust

Today's farm business owners work to achieve economic, environmental, and other community related objectives and goals. They study, and evaluate resource uses, and practices, make decisions, and implement changes in resource use, and practices to improve results. Development and extension of research based knowledge increases the likelihood that problem solving, decision making, and implementation efforts lead to optimal uses of land, labor, and capital resources.

Today's farm business owners look to improve soil health related outcomes. For this project's purposes, they can be seen as asking the following question. Can a farm business owner in the Genesee River Watershed in WNY successfully implement a soil health system, while maintaining or improving economic performance?

To answer the question above, American Farmland Trust (AFT) organized, and led an effort to quantify the economic, and environmental benefits of soil health practices. The effort included people from: Cornell College of Agriculture & Life Sciences/NWNY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Program; USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service; Soil & Water Conservation Districts; farmers operating in the watershed; crop management associations, consultants; and others. NWNY Program staff assumed various roles to complete the before, after analyses for 12 case study farms -- reviewer, analyst, reporter of findings, outreach. The group reported findings by way of web platforms, newsletters, farm visits, field days, other in person producer meetings, and others.

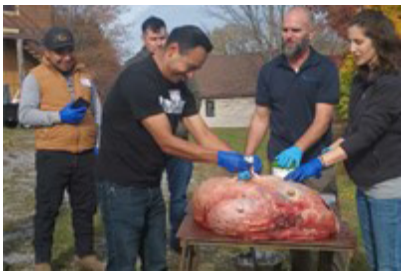
Hundreds of contacts reached via the above methods learned that analysis suggests that it is possible to achieve improved soil health, and other environmental outcomes, while maintaining or improving economic performance. Farm business owners that apply such research based information from analysis, are more likely to achieve objectives and goals.

Producing Quality Milk Takes a Team

Today's milk markets are more competitive than ever before, causing extra pressure on milk producers across our region. It is now difficult to gain access to a new cooperative, thus causing producers to stay with their current milk cooperative regardless of the rules that they impose. Consolidation and globalization of the industry are two large factors in the tightening of milk markets and increased regulations. We have seen milk quality expectations drastically improve over the past 10 years, causing producers to double down on their milk quality to keep pace with the industry and maintain their market. A key to reaching milk quality goals is understanding the risk factors for mastitis within your dairy herd as well as how to manage employees to achieve consistent results.

The CCE NWNY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team collaborated with Quality Milk Production Services (QMPS) to deliver two interactive workshops throughout our region entitled Managing for Quality Milk. The workshops were planned for this year as improvement in milk quality leads to monetary bonuses for many farms and the low milk price this year makes any monetary benefits particularly important. The programs were tailored towards farm needs in each region. The first workshop, held in July in Seneca County, focused on small-farm producers who required more education around prevention and diagnosis of mastitis. The second workshop, held in Wyoming County in October, included a Spanish track for employees and English track for managers and owners and included topics such as team communication, lean management, and technology in diagnostics. A highlight of the courses was a hands-on udder dissection to teach udder anatomy as well as how to properly treat animals at dry-off.

Thirty-five participants from 19 farms representing approximately 15,000 cows attended the workshops. Participants commented that they planned to discuss what they had learned about mastitis risks with their co-workers to improve team communication and implement specific employee management strategies learned in the workshop.



Farm employees practicing proper treatment technique on a cadaver udder. Photo credit: K. Lutz