



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

January - March 2024

Forage Congress Sheds Light on Alternative Practices

The Forage Congress was held at a new venue, the Hotel Canandaigua, Tapestry Collection by Hilton, located in Ontario County on February 28th, 2024. This allowed farmers and ag industry representatives in our ten partner counties to easily participate and benefit from a unified and interactive setting.

This year's program was particularly exciting, focusing on topics related to the implementation of effective management practices to improve the quality of corn silage and maximize the performance and feeding behavior of dairy cattle. It also explored the potential benefits of incorporating alternative forages into crop rotations and discussed the importance of maintaining nutrient balances and reducing carbon footprints on the entire farm.

The program featured a diverse range of keynote speakers Dr. Luiz Ferraretto from the University of Wisconsin, Dr. Quirine Ketterings & Dr. Olivia Godber from Cornell University Nutrient Management Spear Program, Dr. Tom Overton Department Chair, Professor, Animal Science Director, Cornell PRO-DAIRY, Kirsten Workman Nutrient Management and Environmental Sustainability Specialist, PRO-DAIRY, and Tom Kilcer with Advanced Ag System, as well as a panel discussion with producers from various parts of the western New York region. These individuals are recognized to be at the forefront of their field, and our attendees found their insights to be invaluable. The program also provided many networking opportunities. The agenda was developed with input from the NWNYS Team's dairy and field crops advisory committees. Approximately 54 participants attended the day-long event and felt the topics were relevant and timely.



Forage Congress Photo taken by: Jodi Letham

Corn, Soybean & Small Grain Winter Congresses Get a Needed Facelift

The team made some big changes to the winter congresses in 2024! The Corn Congress (Jan. 4) and Soybean & Small Grains Congress (Feb. 14) were both one-day events at a new location, the DoubleTree by Hilton Rochester Hotel. Our traditional east and west locations were unable to accommodate our needs, so we moved to a central location for growers in the 10-county NWNYS region. These winter congresses are the largest commodity specific programs for corn, soybean and wheat in NY.

This year's programs looked at addressing new agricultural technology and pest issues and providing potential crop management options for growers to continue to succeed in 2024. We had specialists from Michigan State, Canada, Purdue and North Dakota State along with Cornell faculty. Forty different industry sponsors set up booths to support our programs and educate growers about their new products.

Almost 600 participants attended the two congresses. Participants learned valuable information on spray technology, herbicide resistance, and controlling vomitoxin, tar spot and white mold. There were also some interesting grower panels on spraying with drones, irrigation, and high management wheat with growers from New York, Ohio, and Michigan. Everyone praised how good the program was, liked the new facility, enjoyed the interaction with other farmers they hadn't met before and visiting the exhibitor booths. Many needed their DEC pesticide applicator credits, and they received 5.5 if they attended both meetings. We have already booked the hotel for 2025 and hope to continue to grow participation.



Photo Credit: Jarmila Haseler

Dairy Day 2024: “Udderly Sustainable and Resilient”

Sustainability should be viewed from a whole-farm perspective. Farmers are looking for insight from research and experienced farmers for implementable ideas and practical research that contributes to the resiliency of our dairy farm businesses. This year’s 2nd Annual CCE NWNYS Dairy Day, held on February 1, 2024, at The Chalet at East Hill Creamery in Perry, NY attracted 13 NWNYS dairy and beef farmers along with 16 agri-service industry members from 8 counties.

Dr. Sarah Morrison of Miner Institute presented feeding strategies for methane mitigation including which products were tested and currently available for dairy farm and nutritionist use. Lauren Ray, Ag Sustainability and Energy Engineer from Cornell PRO-DAIRY described different methods for methane reduction via manure management and the latest on what we know about carbon credits. Jay Canzonier of Cornell Ag Workforce Development engaged the crowd describing new opportunities in middle management on dairies via the “Dairy Specialist Apprenticeship”. Farmers, industry agri-service members and extension educators networked and swapped experiences over the lunch hour. Lunch was catered locally and featured freshly bottled milk from a nearby value-added on-farm dairy processor. The one-day program closed with a panel discussion featuring Josh Peck of El-Vi Farms, where insights were shared regarding working towards “win-win” partnerships between private companies, farms, and state resources when considering a digester or any other sustainability project.

Farmers participated in discussions and networking with industry experts throughout the day and were able to view the cheese caves and purchase locally made artisan cheeses from the venue. From the presentations, participants benefited from strategies to guide their businesses through sustainability options and ideas. The program was interactive and multiple participants reported wanting to enroll someone from their farm in the Dairy Specialist Apprenticeship program. Other participants mentioned they would be interested in learning more about ways for small and medium-sized dairies to reduce carbon emissions.



Photo by Ashley Knapp

Hands-On Animal Care Training Workshops Meet Annual FARM Program Training Requirements

The National Milk Producer Federation and Dairy Management Inc. launched the FARM program in 2009. This program, which stands for Farmers Assuring Responsible Management, helps to set the baseline standards for animal care, environmental stewardship and workforce development for the US dairy industry. As part of the animal care branch of FARM, annual training is required for any employee with responsibilities in the following areas: animal stockmanship, calf care, non-ambulatory cattle, fitness for transport and euthanasia. In July of this year, a new set of standards will be rolled-out in FARM version 5.0, meaning all farms participating in FARM (98% of US farms), must be updated on the new standards.

To both relay the changes with the new FARM version 5.0 standards while at the same time providing necessary training for dairy employees, statewide dairy specialists and PRO-DAIRY teamed together to bring one-day hands-on animal care training workshops to ten locations across the state. The NWNYS team participated in the development of training materials used across the state and hosted two workshops in our region. All workshops were taught in English and Spanish, and participants received a certificate of completion to serve as documentation of their annual training.

The NWNYS workshops were held in Ontario and Orleans counties and drew 36 participants from farms representing over 15,000 cows, dairy co-operatives, and industry. New interactive hands-on models were used to teach activities such as pain control for disbudding, esophageal tube-feeding of calves and proper euthanasia techniques. Participants noted that they liked the small groups, discussion-based learning, hands-on activities, and FARM version 5.0 updates. One participant said that he enjoyed everything as the activities were engaging and involved real-life situations.



A participant practicing placement of an esophageal tube on a calf model. Photo credit: K. Lutz.



Reviewing safety when moving a non-ambulatory cow. Photo credit: J. Canzonier.