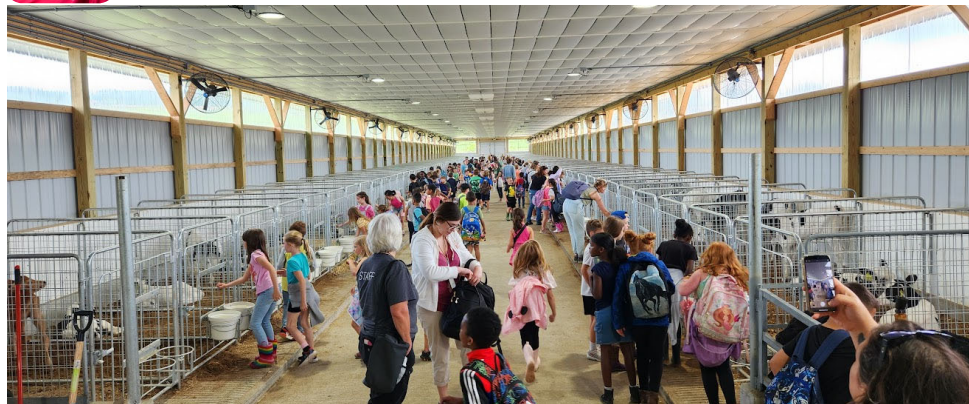




Team Events Provide Educational Opportunities for the Public on Dairy

Betsy Hicks, Area Dairy Management Specialist



The summer offers many opportunities for the team to interact with the public and offer learning opportunities about farming, crop production and dairy production. County fairs within the region, the NYS Fair, Sundaes on the Farm and school programs like Agstravaganza and EZ Acres 5th Grade Dairy Farm Tour are all occasions that the team participates in to answer questions.

This year, Janice and Betsy included butter making across many public events they tabled at this quarter. A simple activity that allows children and adults alike to make their own butter from a splash of heavy cream, butter making gives the team an opportunity to talk about dairy production in the few minutes that participants are shaking their container. After hearing the familiar butterball rattle around in the container, many people are thrilled with the magic they just shook with their hands and eager to taste their efforts with a piece of bread or a cracker. People often say, they “didn’t know it was so easy to make butter”, and ask how to make a greater amount at home. The interaction gives a positive spin to dairy products and the farmers that produce milk, encouraging people to ask questions and learn more about dairy in their community. Butter making occurred at several county fairs this year, along with at Tioga County Sundaes on the Farm, and we estimate that nearly 1000 people made butter with the team .

Dairy farm tours are another way the team is able to interact with the public. At Riverside Dairy, over 100 youth from Broome County toured the farm learning about cows, milking facilities, and how calves are raised. At EZ Acres, over 150 Cortland County 5th graders got a full day of touring the dairy and learning about the maternity barn, cow comfort, manure management, crop production, hoof trimming and more. At Lawton’s Jersey Farm, 30 Newark Valley Junior FFA students were able to learn more about tiestalls, calf care and heifers. Teaming up with farmers and the local extension office to put on these open-farm tours are one of the best ways to share about dairy farming and answer questions directly.

While the public is not the team’s number one audience, they still are an important part of the outreach efforts we work on. Whether it’s setting up a table with information on different crops that farmers grow, different feeds that cattle eat, or making butter out of heavy cream, the team is happy to be a part of county efforts to reach the public, and eager to be on farm the day that a dairy farm opens up to the public to help out.

Team Outreach Highlights

Community Events:

- Participated in county fairs, NYS Fair, Sundaes on the Farm, and school programs like Agstravaganza and EZ Acres Dairy Farm Tour.

Butter-Making Activity:

- 900 participants learned to make butter.
- Hands-on demos sparked interest in dairy and encouraged questions.

Dairy Farm Tours:

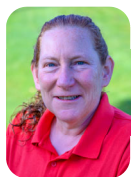
- **Riverside Dairy:** 100+ Broome County youth explored cows, milking, and calf care.
- **EZ Acres:** 150 Cortland 5th graders toured barns, manure management, and crop production.
- **Lawton’s Jersey Farm:** 30 Newark Valley FFA students learned about calf care and heifers.

Educational Displays

- Shared info on crops, cattle feed, and dairy production at public events.

Community Collaboration:

- Partnered with farmers and extension offices for open-farm tours.



Unlocking Dairy Potential Through Superior Silage Strategies *Janice Degni, CCE Field Crop Specialist*



Helping our farmers attain optimum **forage quality** is a priority of our outreach. We focus on the timing of the first cutting hay crop and corn silage harvest at the end of season. The energy and digestibility of the crop are directly correlated with the variety of corn, maturity of the crop and its percent moisture at harvest, which is reported in terms of dry matter.

The whole corn plant chopped into small pieces, preserved through fermentation, and contained in a storage unit is a primary ingredient of home-grown feed for our dairy herds. Corn silage typically makes up 40-60% of the forages in the dairy cow's diet. Corn silage is a unique forage because it is made of both the plant fodder, stems and leaves, as well as grain from the ear. The starch contained in the grain makes a significant contribution to the energy needs of the dairy cow. Home grown feeds can make up 50 -80% of the cow's diet. Purchased grains supplement the protein and energy needs in small quantities to assure a balanced ration. On average purchased feed costs for herds account for 60% of overall expenses. Optimizing the harvest and preservation of the corn silage and haylage crop can have a beneficial impact to a dairy's bottom line.

This fall Janice used a [growing degree day tracking tool](#) along with corn staging to predict dates for silage harvest. We partnered with CCE Cayuga and a host farm in Port Byron for a clinic on September 4 and Ward and Van Scoy in Newark Valley on September 6. Farms bring samples of stalks from their fields to be chipped and tested for DM. The clinic invites connection with neighbors, a chance to compare notes on the growing season, guidelines for crop preservation and a dry matter result for developing a targeted harvest plan.

With a known dry matter determined at the clinic we can predict date to begin harvest based on standard dry down expectations of a daily decrease of one-half point of dry matter per day under average fall weather conditions. Harvesting within the prescribed dry matter range for the storage unit used on the farm contributes to better preservation through a thorough fermentation of the crop.

Highlights

Timely corn silage harvest ensures a quality feed that sets up the farm's success for the coming year.

- 35 fields, 2000 ac tested across our region
- 63,577 Acres of corn silage in the region

Starch and fiber provide most of the energy in corn silage-based diets for dairy cows.

Better digestion of these nutrients can:

- Boost milk production
- Lower feed costs by improving feed efficiency

Cost to establish an acre of corn (estimated at \$500/ac) equates to \$3.2 million dollars invested in the 63,577 acres in the region. (includes: seed, tillage, planting, fertilization, plant protection, harvest)

Optimizing forage quality is a priority for dairy farmers, especially regarding the first cutting of hay and corn silage harvest.

Losses of silage leachate to the environment are minimized when the crop is harvested at the recommended moisture.

Corn Silage Clinics provide farmers with resources to test dry matter, plan optimal harvest dates, and exchange knowledge about crop management.

Timely harvest and preservation of corn silage can have a significant positive impact on the farm's bottom line by reducing the need for costly purchased feeds.