



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 2024

Feeder Schools Fuel Farm Economics and Cow Health

The dairy farm employee in charge of mixing and delivering daily rations to the cows is key to the farm's success. Not only is that employee responsible for the stewardship of the biggest input cost on the farm, the feed ingredients, but they are also largely accountable for maintaining herd health through proper execution of the farm's nutrition plan. These points, including the importance of communication with the farm management team and safety, were discussed during two Feeder Schools held in November 2024 in Genesee and Ontario Counties. The program was part of a series of Feeder Schools developed by Regional Dairy Specialists across the state and was taught by NWNYS Dairy Specialists, Nutritionists, and Industry Specialists.

The program drew 54 participants representing 28 farms and 8 counties across Western NY. Both locations offered station presentations in English and Spanish and covered topics essential to dairy feeder success. These topics included: economics and the importance of the dairy farm feeder, forage and ration dry matter monitoring and control, feed quality control, feed loss reduction, ration auditing and cow eating behavior, feed inventory monitoring and safety in the bunker silos, and equipment troubleshooting. In all groups, interaction between attendees was significant, and there was a notable degree of learning by sharing experience between one professional dairy feeder to another. Participants left the training with a new appreciation for their role in feeding consistency and farm economics, and how to better achieve both safely and efficiently.



Photo 1. CCE NWNYS Feeder School participants learn how to troubleshoot issues related to mixer wagon calibration and maintenance at Reyncrest Farms in Genesee County. Photo by Betsy Hicks.

NWNYS Growers Excel in 2024 NYS Soybean Yield Contest

The NWNYS Team coordinated and supervised the annual Soybean Yield Contest sponsored by the NY Corn and Soybean Growers Association. Each year there are around 100 entries from around the state in the contest. There are cash prizes for the top three 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 also had the privilege of emceeing the awards ceremony at the Winter Expo in Syracuse on January 16. It is a great opportunity to promote soybean production in our region and NY.



Pit Farms accepts their award from NYCSGA president Tom Corcoran, Photo: Katie Becker Photography

In 2024, growers from the NWNYS region fared well in the state and the West and Finger Lakes regions. Although we didn't take the top spot this year, Pit Farms from Wayne County took second place with an entry of 87.89 bu/acre. In each region, awards were presented for the top three yields in Group 1 and Group 2 soybeans. Growers from NWNYS took 11 of 12 awards from the two regions and were from seven of our counties (Livingston, Monroe, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates).

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 February issue of Ag-Focus. To see all the NY results go to the NYC&SGA webpage (<https://www.nycornsoy.org/yield-contests>).

Hoof Trimming Workshops Create a Solid Foundation



Participants discussing hoof trimming angles while practicing on cadaver hooves. Photo credit: K. Lutz.

Without a solid foundation, no building will survive stress over time. The same is true with our dairy cattle. Their foundation, their hooves, are responsible for supporting a large frame and over 1200 pounds of body weight. The way in which the hoof grows and wears over time, especially in our confinement systems, is greatly impacted by factors

including walking surface and nutrition and can be managed with proper hoof trimming. Unfortunately, lameness is a big issue on dairy farms, with recent NY based studies finding a wide range between 14-54% of cattle affected. According to 2018 USDA NAHMS data, 9% of all dairy cows being removed from the herd are removed due to lameness.

Due to the importance of lameness prevention and input from our Dairy Advisory Council, the CCE NWN Y Dairy Specialists organized two regional hoof trimming workshops in November of 2024. The workshops were unique based on the specific needs of our diverse producer base, with a one-day workshop for smaller farms and a two-day workshop for larger farms with Spanish interpretation. Aaron LaVoy, Professional Hoof Trimmer and Founder of the Midwestern Hoof Trimming School, led the hands-on workshops with support from a network of local hoof trimming colleagues.

The workshops were limited to 15 participants each to allow for safe supervision of the hands-on portion. The 26 participants represented 8 counties, 18 farms and approximately 18,000 cows. They learned anatomy and physiology of the bovine hoof and the theory of the Balance Method of hoof trimming before then being given the opportunity to practice this method on bovine cadaver hooves. One experienced farm owner noted that the workshop was very good, and he had learned a lot that he hoped would help him with the lameness issue he had been struggling with in his herd.



A participant practicing the Balance Method of hoof trimming for the first time using a modified grinder. Photo credit: K. Lutz.

Stockmanship & Stewardship: Learning and Networking



Dr. Adam Murray, left, beef cattle extension specialist provided his thoughts on NY beef production. Photos courtesy Vernon Bewley, Neogen.

Cattle care and handling are important practices for beef and dairy producers. Handling techniques are learned by demonstrations. The New York Beef Quality Assurance program recently hosted the Stockmanship & Stewardship event in Hamburg, NY, one of four held across the country. The event

brought together 121 beef and dairy producers, industry and CCE professionals from across the region and beyond on October 25 & 26. The event provided an invaluable opportunity for producers to expand their skills, network with peers, and deepen their commitment to animal welfare and beef quality. By attending, all producers received their Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) certification. The event was generously supported by a grant from the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

The event featured interactive round-robin sessions led by top industry experts, each addressing critical aspects of beef and dairy production:

- Consumer Insights: Understanding consumer values and demands in today's beef market.
- Cull Cow Management: Effective strategies for managing cull cows to enhance herd productivity.
- The Grazier's Toolbox: Practical tools and techniques for optimizing pasture management and improving grazing systems.
- Beef x Dairy Cross Opportunities: Insights and strategies from a producer experienced with beef-on-dairy crossbreeding.
- BQA Transportation: A truck and trailer walk around with the BQA Transportation Pre-Trip Checklist, focusing regulations for transport.

The afternoon featured insight from national sponsor Neogen on herd replacement selection. The highlight was watching and learning good handling practices from clinicians Curt Pate and Dr. Ron Gill. It was evident that producers are looking for more opportunities like this.



The panelists answer questions on day one of the Stockmanship & Stewardship event.