

# Cornell Cooperative Extension

## South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Program

**Dairy Education**

**Farm Business**

**Grazing**

**Field Crops**

**Soil Health**

### **South Central NY Dairy & Field Crops Team: Supporting Farmers, Building the Future**

The Cornell Cooperative Extension South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Team is proud to support local farmers with research, education, and practical tools that enhance productivity, sustainability, and profitability.

This year, we helped farmers improve forage quality through alfalfa monitoring and corn silage harvest clinics. By guiding optimal harvest timing and testing dry matter, we supported better crop preservation and dairy efficiency.

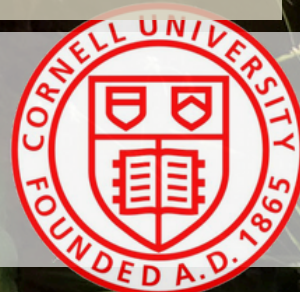
To address economic challenges, our “Whole Farm Efficiency” webinar series delivered actionable strategies in areas like milk quality and reproduction—helping farms remain viable during down markets.

Our on-farm research provided crucial insights into seed corn maggot damage, with findings shared statewide. Cornell scientists are also exploring how environmental factors influence pest behavior to improve future recommendations. We promoted sustainable practices through pasture walks and workshops focused on grazing management and resource conservation. CCE also supports climate initiatives by educating farmers on ways to align with greenhouse gas reduction policies.

Investing in the future, we engaged over 150 youth through interactive animal care and farm management programs—building essential skills and agricultural interest. Public outreach at events like county fairs and the NYS Fair helped us connect with the community, highlight local agriculture, and spark curiosity through activities like butter making.

Every season brings new challenges, but with the continued support of Cornell Cooperative Extension, our farmers are more prepared than ever. Together, we’re growing a resilient, innovative, and thriving agricultural future.

**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.**





## Boosting Dairy Efficiency: Insights from the Whole Farm Webinar Series

Dairy farms face tight margins in today's economy. Focusing on efficiency can help dairy farmers cut waste and bolster profitability. In early 2024, CCE regional dairy specialists collaborated on a virtual webinar series, "Whole Farm Efficiency." This series covered topics that dairy farmers could focus on during a down market to improve profitability. Areas explored included dairy cattle reproduction, feeding systems, labor, transition cows and colostrum management, heifer management, and milk quality. Both invited speakers and Cornell Cooperative Extension specialists presented during live webinars, with recordings available on the SCNY Team's YouTube Channel.

Around 100 people tuned in to the live presentations each week for ten weeks, including many farmers in the SCNY region. Since then, the recorded videos on YouTube have been watched from 200-800 times per video. These webinars are also relevant to dairy farmers outside of NY and have been shared through write-ups by Hoard's Dairyman, a national publication that reaches the greater dairy industry. One such write-up included a topic co-presented with NWNy's Margaret Quaassdorff on managing heifer inventory.



**Betsy Hicks,**  
Dairy Specialist

## Dairy Education

### Empowering Dairy Farms: Animal Care Workshops Drive Positive Change

Regional CCE Dairy Educators and PRO-DAIRY staff designed an on-farm workshop to provide hands-on training and demonstrations in both English and Spanish to animal care staff on dairy farms. These workshops were aimed at giving instruction on calf care, stockmanship, euthanasia, and fitness for transport. As part of the training, discussion around key points for each area was included so that participants could ask questions and get clarification on important topics in their field.

Over 27 participants attended two workshops in the SCNY region on this topic. One Cayuga County dairy sent their maternity pen/calf team to the Animal Care workshop held in Scipio. After getting more information from the workshop, they returned to the farm wanting to tighten up protocols in the maternity area. They talked with the farm owner about giving calves colostrum sooner after birth because they learned that they will have a better start to life if given colostrum ASAP. The farm owner was happy to let the maternity team make the changes and have ownership over the protocols with colostrum and calf care. The next shift to care for calves is thrilled to have fewer calves to feed colostrum at the start of their shift. The owner is happy the farm team is using the information gained from the workshops and implementing positive changes on their dairy.

Collaborators: Kathy Barrett, Rob Lynch - PRO-DAIRY, Lindsay Ferlito, CCE NCRAT, Margaret Quaassdorff, Kaitlyn Lutz, CCE NWNy, and Daniela Gonzalez, CCE CNY.





# Highlights & Impacts

- The team delivered 25 educational events including webinars, meetings, workshops, tours or clinics, reaching 544 participants. Podcasts had 55 to 400 people per episode. Webinars had 95-175 per episode.
- Beef x dairy survey data was disseminated through a white paper. The paper informs on beef x dairy practices on dairy farms, a growing sector within both the beef and dairy industries. and In-person and virtual presentations addressed questions about practices discovered in the survey. A second survey is underway.
- The team presented educational stations that addressed crop production and feeds for dairy systems. Over 900 people attended Sundaes on the Farm at Frisbie Brother's Dairy in Spencer.
- Several hundred children and adults enjoyed the thrill of turning heaving cream into butter by their own hands at county fairs and made a connection between agriculture and their food.
- Betsy supported 4-H fairs across the region through assistance during market sales, helping at dairy shows, and judging master showman classes.
- Six farms participated in a state-wide grant project, "Healthy Herds", in which they received a cow comfort assessment, parlor assessment, and herd records assessment. Farms compared their data to the 18-herd benchmark and made changes based on farm goals.
- On Farm consultations assessed: 1.) extreme weather damage, pest and nutrient issues and their diagnosis, 2.) 4 on-farm pasture consultations assessed stand production, condition, species and weed management. Soil testing and management recommendations were made, and 3 farms Precision Ag Consultations in collaboration with the team, ACS and Ohara equipment focused on ease of use of this complex technology.
- An on-farm pasture consultation was held with 20 Amish sheep farmers in Tioga County. An assessment of pasture species, production, and management was discussed.
- Four Dairy Advancement Program grant awards were facilitated with a dairy for recordkeeping or business planning, ranging in value from \$2,500 to \$5,000 each.
- Feeder trainings were held at a Cayuga Shop Meeting, as well as on individual dairies during the year to improve feeding efficiency and best management practices and reduce shrink. Feeder Schools in the fall were held in two locations in the region, in both English and Spanish. Over 50 people attended these hands-on and demonstration sessions.
- A NRCS bale grazing grant with CCE Schuyler and the University of Kentucky was started, to be continued for several years of study. Three core farms within the SCNY region will bale graze for the next three winters, forage samples and soil samples will be analyzed as a part of the study.



## Feeder Schools: Elevating Dairy Farm Proficiency

Feeder workshops are pivotal in enhancing the skills and knowledge of dairy farm employees responsible for feed mixing, a role crucial for overall profitability. Recognizing the significant impact of feed-related tasks on dairy expenses, Feeder Schools have emerged as collaborative efforts among regional Dairy Educators across NY and Cornell PRO-DAIRY.

Conducted at two SCNY locations, Cortland and Auburn, these workshops catered to English and Spanish-speaking participants. With over 40 attendees, the schools provided invaluable opportunities for skill development and knowledge exchange. Demonstrations and insights from PRO-DAIRY and industry experts enriched the sessions.

Participants delved into key responsibilities, discussing aspects such as minimizing shrink, ensuring safety, maintaining equipment, effective bunk management, understanding herd dynamics, and optimizing nutrition. The collaborative learning environment allowed for the exchange of best practices among peers. Positive feedback from a farm manager highlighted the impact, with employees praising the class and one participant deeming it the best feeder school attended. These initiatives play a vital role in boosting the proficiency and impact of those involved in feed mixing and delivery on dairy farms.

# Dairy

South Central Dairy & Field Crops Team

## Battling Seed Corn Maggot: Research Aims to Protect Crops and Boost Yields

For several years, a coordinated effort of on-farm research plots across the state has assessed seed corn maggot damage. This effort involves CCE field crop educators, the NYS IPM program, and the Poveda Lab at Cornell. The Poveda Lab provided protocols for sticky trap assessments and field-placed seed traps to measure feeding damage. The collected data will inform the level of concern for crop damage from seed corn maggot.

Cornell researchers are also investigating the role of environmental cues, such as soil temperature, moisture, organic matter, and crop residue, in mediating seed corn maggot preference and attack. This research could provide evidence-based recommendations to growers on how to avoid or reduce seed corn maggot infestations by adjusting planting practices or using insecticide seed treatments.

Collaborators include Dr. Katja Poveda of the Poveda Lab, Anna DiPaola, PhD candidate, who managed the research project, and a network of CCE field crop educators across NYS.

Janice Degni,  
Field Crop Specialist

# Crop Pests





## Strategizing Harvest: Corn Silage Clinics Empower Farmers

Corn Silage Clinics provide farmers with resources to test dry matter, plan harvest dates, and share crop management knowledge. Farmers leave with a dry matter result, allowing them to predict harvest dates based on an expected daily dry down of half a point under average fall conditions. Harvesting within the ideal dry matter range improves preservation through better fermentation.

Helping farmers achieve optimum forage quality is a key outreach priority. We focus on timing first cutting hay and corn silage harvests, critical since corn silage makes up over 50% of a dairy cow's daily ration. Crop energy and digestibility are directly tied to corn variety, maturity, and moisture at harvest.

This fall, Janice used a growing degree day tool and corn staging to predict harvest timing. We partnered with CCE Cayuga and EM Wenger in Port Byron for a clinic on September 4, and Ward and Van Scoy in Newark Valley on September 6. Farms brought stalk samples for chipping and dry matter testing. Clinics foster neighbor connections, provide crop preservation guidelines, and support harvest planning.

Collaborators: CCE Cayuga Ag Staff, Host Farm EM Wenger, Dairy One, SCNYDFC

# Strategies for Success

South Central Dairy & Field Crops Team



## Building Climate Resilience in Agriculture: Strategies for a Sustainable Future

Education and guidance were developed to help farmers align their practices with climate initiatives and public policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and protecting natural resources. The goal is to prepare agricultural producers for regulatory changes through targeted education on sustainable practices and methane's role in global warming.

Each growing season brings unique challenges. Weather extremes over the past two decades have increased difficulties in minimizing erosion and maintaining soil health. Climate science findings now clearly link a warming planet to human activity since the industrial age. Extension and partner agencies began addressing these issues with farmers in the early 2000s.

Our efforts focus on improving understanding of climate change impacts and offering strategies to overcome them. We aim to build awareness, help the agricultural community adapt to new policies, and promote soil health practices that protect long-term sustainability.

The dairy industry's goal of moving toward Net Zero emissions is an important focus. Our programs introduce options for farmers to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining productive, resilient operations.



## **Dairy Delights: Engaging the Public with Hands-On Learning"**

Summer offers many opportunities for the team to engage the public and share knowledge about farming, crop production, and dairy. Events like county fairs, the NYS Fair, Sundaes on the Farm, and school programs such as AgStravaganza and the EZ Acres 5th Grade Dairy Tour allow the team to answer questions and promote agriculture.

This year, Janice and Betsy brought butter making to many events. This simple activity lets kids and adults shake heavy cream into butter while learning about dairy production. The familiar butterball rattle excites participants, who are often surprised by how easy it is to make butter—and eager to try it at home. These interactions offer a fun, memorable way to spark curiosity about dairy farming.

Butter making took place at several county fairs and Tioga County's Sundaes on the Farm, with over 1,000 participants. Dairy farm tours also help connect youth with agriculture. Over 280 students toured Riverside Dairy, EZ Acres, and Lawton's Jersey Farm, learning about cow care, milking, crops, and more.

Collaborators: Tioga County Ag Resource Group, CCE Cortland County, EZ Acres, Riverside Dairy, Lawton's Jersey Farm.

# **Building Ag Awareness**

**South Central Dairy & Field Crops Team**

## **Future Farmers: Hands-On Dairy Workshops Inspire Youth**

Using models for hands-on activities, youth learn to care for dairy animals. While not the team's main audience, engaging youth in animal care and providing safe, hands-on learning is key to the dairy industry's future.

Calf care, injection, and calving models purchased by regional teams were available throughout winter and spring 2024. These were used across the SCNY region with 4-H and other youth in several counties.

In Cortland, training included "Birtha," a life-size cow torso that can "give birth" to a model calf. Youth learned delivery positions, methods to assist births, and for older participants, how to adjust a mispositioned calf.

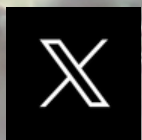
In Broome and at Animal Crackers on Campus, the life-size injection model of a cow's head and neck was used. Youth practiced intramuscular and subcutaneous injections, focusing on needle safety.

In Cayuga, Tioga, and Chemung counties, the calf model helped demonstrate ear tagging, injection, and banding techniques, applicable across livestock species.

Over 150 youth attended events across the region. It's a pleasure to work with the future of our industry and answer their questions.



# Extension in Action





# <https://scnydfc.cce.cornell.edu/>

60 Central Ave. Room 140, Cortland, New York 13045

For more information on the South Central Dairy & Field Crops Team,  
contact Admin at 607.391.2662 or [dg576@cornell.edu](mailto:dg576@cornell.edu).



**Donette Griffith,**  
**[dg576@cornell.edu](mailto:dg576@cornell.edu) / 607.391.2662**  
**Team Administrative Assistant**

The South Central NY Dairy & Field Crops Program provides educational opportunities and technical assistance to help the industry with emerging issues, production bottlenecks, and new technologies. Our primary audiences are dairy and field crop producers as well as agri-service providers with secondary audiences of the media, non-farm residents and consumers. We focus on areas that will help improve farm profitability within the region since farm financial success is a key to maintaining a viable dairy and field crops industry. Our program's education helps our industry respond to both internal and external forces that help it keep pace in a rapidly changing world.

**Our Mission:**

- 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
- Encourage a better understanding of agriculture by the general community