



Cornell Cooperative Extension

South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Program

Broome | Cayuga | Chemung | Cortland | Tioga | Tompkins

Dairy & Field Crops in Tompkins County

An Important Economic Engine

DAIRY FACTS: 28 Dairy Farm Businesses earning

\$25 Million Dollars of farm gate income for milk

Caring for **8500** dairy cows, Producing **25** million gallons of milk per year.

Growing forages: hay crop and corn silage for their feed on

84,568 Acres with a value of **\$24** million and

\$4.6 million income for cattle and calves sold.



Market Value of Ag Products Sold in Tompkins County in 2022 - \$90 Million!

Hands-On Learning Labs

Feeder School: Understand equipment maintenance, proper feed mix, cow behavior and communication with farm team

- Optimize feed bunk management, silage storage, best practices and SAFETY.

Transition Calf Workshop: Identifying bottle necks for raising calves through weaning & transition

Sprayer & Planting Clinics: Prepare machinery to optimize performance



Focus on Forage Quality



Alert for Hay Crop First Harvest - Measuring alfalfa height is a reliable indicator of forage quality for both alfalfa and grass hay. By tracking alfalfa heights weekly in the early spring, we can predict first cutting harvest dates to help farms achieve optimal forage quality. Alfalfa heights are easy to measure, and they are more accurate than other methods used to determine harvest timing. A report is sent weekly reporting crop status and anticipated harvest dates.

Corn Silage Clinics - Our burndown clinics are designed to help producers develop a harvest plan based on field maturity. Corn silage is a cornerstone crop for dairy farms because it provides a high-energy, digestible forage that supports milk production and herd health. Its ability to deliver consistent nutrition—especially in the form of fermentable carbohydrates and fiber—makes it a reliable feed source throughout the year.

Forage quality directly impacts milk yield, and corn silage offers a balance of starch and fiber that complements other feed components.

A Tompkins County Dairy hosted a transition calf workshop that focused on health, nutrition, facilities and management taught by CCE regional dairy specialists and PRO-DAIRY staff, in both English and Spanish. Workshops included group discussions around proper feed protein transitions, analysis of a facility of a group of calves, anatomy and proper injections, vaccinations and health, and planning for calf inventory changes and challenges throughout the year.

Over 25 people from 15 farms attended the workshops, held on-farm to utilize scenarios as training tools. From the workshops, attendees would be able to analyze their own



transition calf pens for adequate space to minimize crowding and maximize feed and water access. In addition, they were challenged to work with their nutritionist to ensure their calves are receiving adequate protein through feed changes, as well as look at their own records to plan for large numbers of calvings throughout the year.

Attendees stated that new information from the trainings, included learning anatomy of the neck and proper administration techniques for injections as well as learning industry standards for bedded space, and how to keep stress at a minimum when moving calves. Since the training, one farm has reached out to plan their new transition barn, citing the information they learned from the workshop as guidance for their plans

On-farm pasture walks offer more than just a scenic stroll—they're immersive, hands-on learning experiences that bring pasture management principles to life. Managed pastures check all the boxes: they support environmental health, foster community goodwill, and make economic sense. With year-round vegetation, biodiversity, and erosion control, pastures are a powerhouse of sustainability.

Laughing Goat Fiber Farm, grazes small ruminants which comes with their own set of challenges. The farm uses net fencing within a boundary of woven wire fencing to manage their flock. Jess Waltemeyer, Cornell PRO-LIVESTOCK small ruminant specialist, discussed parasite life cycles and management strategies. Conservation projects supported by Tompkins County Soil and Water included drainage swales, a composting pad, perimeter fencing, waterline that serves the entire grazing system, and tree planting for shade along the western boundary—enhancing both animal welfare and pasture health.



Let's face it—there's something heartwarming about seeing livestock grazing peacefully. It evokes a sense of connection to local agriculture and appreciation for the farmer graziers.

Each host farm opens its gates to share their unique management strategies—from fencing and watering systems to paddock layout—creating a rich setting for peer-to-peer learning.

On-Farm Learning & Application



Photo 1: Rob Lynch, DVM of Cornell PRO-DAIRY leads discussion around health issues with transition calves, utilizing a set of preserved organs harvested from a sick calf that was euthanized.

Supporting Non-Dairy Livestock

By the Numbers 2024 Meetings and Workshops

- 30 Meetings / Workshops with 687 participants
- 203 Personalized Consultations & Responses to phone inquiries
- 11 Events to Increase Public Awareness of Agriculture
- Podcasts with 201 listeners
- Virtual Seminars totaling 350 contact hours

