



Cornell Cooperative Extension

South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Program

Broome | Cayuga | Chemung | Cortland | Tioga | Tompkins

Dairy & Field Crops in Cortland County — An Important Economic Engine

DAIRY FACTS: 59 Dairy Farm Businesses earning

\$41.9 Million Dollars of farm gate income for milk

Caring for nearly **7000** dairy cows, Producing **43** million gallons of milk per year.

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

66,863 Acres with a value of **\$26.4** million and

\$5 million income for cattle and calves sold.



Market Value of Ag Products Sold in Cortland County in 2022 - \$108 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.



School Programs to Grow Ag Awareness

Supporting agricultural awareness in local communities is central to our mission. With less than 1.5% of the U.S. population directly involved in farming, few people have any connection to agriculture. We believe it's essential for people to understand where their food comes from and recognize the many benefits farms bring to their communities. This belief leads us to team up with County CCE Associations and industry stakeholders to give opportunities to learn about farming and showcase the importance in

our community. Ag awareness includes focused events for students and open houses held on farms for the general public.

Agstravaganza, an annual event for Cortland County 4th grade students from across the county. The event features around 14 different ag-based stations where students learn about production from apples to field crops, animals from dairy and beef to goats, and other diverse topics like pollinators and compost. A visit to EZ Acres dairy farm is held for Cortland County 5th grade students. This day on the farm features stations that teach about foot trimming, feed, youngstock care, cow comfort, feed storage, milk harvest and manure management. These two events are annual offerings that Janice and Betsy are there to share their knowledge and love of agriculture.



Supporting Non-Dairy Livestock

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.

Mike Quinlin of Cortland County hosted a pasture walk at the farm where he rents pasture and custom grazes a beef herd. Mike manages pasture to maximize the production of both the animals and pasture species. By managing the grazing of his herd through mob grazing, providing smaller paddocks to a mob of animals to eat down some less desirable pasture species, to larger swaths of ground to take advantage of abundant forage. He demonstrated how he manages the herd according to the conditions.

From a production standpoint, pastures are the most cost-effective forage system. Pasture requires more management than feeding stored feeds because the quantity and quality change daily. Animals harvest their own feed, reducing the need for expensive equipment. 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.

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 farmers behind it.

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

