

Cornell Cooperative Extension

South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Program

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY – MARCH 2026



From Dry to Fresh Workshop—Setting Up Cows for Success

Betsy Hicks, Area Dairy Management Specialist

Transition cows – cows that are pregnant, calve and start lactating – are cows that need a lot of attention from herd health staff on farm. This period of time is the most critical for cows to have ample space, minimal stress and assistance when needed. Farms in our region depend on their staff to give the best care possible, and look forward to hands-on trainings to help educate their staff on important ideas for this particular type of cow. In response to this need, the regional dairy educators and PRO-DAIRY staff designed a workshop to be completely hands-on and demonstration to give practical experience and expertise to attendees. This training was also held in both English and Spanish, as our farms' workforce is represented in both languages. Spanish language translation was done by a graduate student from Cornell University, who has been hired to do translation in the past. Sponsorship was obtained from three industry businesses, Farm Credit East, Cargill and Zoetis to help cover costs associated with the workshop.

The training was held on farm at a host dairy in Cayuga County, and was split up into four main areas – calving training using the life-size “Birtha” model, fresh cow evaluation held in the fresh cow pen, facilities evaluation held in the barns, and precision dry cow training, including nutrition, vaccinations, body condition scoring and more. In the calving station, attendees were able to practice with the model to correct a calf coming the wrong way during birth. In the fresh cow evaluation station, participants were able to do assess health of a real fresh cow including temperature checks, ketosis checks, DA evaluation and more. In the facilities station, participants were given industry standards for transition cow pens, and worked together to evaluate a pen of cows on the farm. In the precision dry cow station, participants were shown different diets from the farm separated through the Penn State Shaker Box, and discussed the reasons for why cows are



Participants evaluating fresh cows during the workshop.

fed different diets and best practices for ensuring cows receive what they need to succeed.

The 18 participants from the workshop shared their thoughts in an evaluation at the end of the training. All stated the workshop was just at the right level. Participants stated they learned a lot of tips like how to assist cows that are calving and things to consider in the maternity section, as well as feeding. Fresh cow checks and learning to find sick cows were also recognized as being helpful. They liked that the training was clear, understandable and that they could participate in their own language. During the workshop, it was great to see those more experienced helping the newer participants learn new skills, and work together so that all could be successful. These types of trainings are helpful to have multiple farm staff from the same farm participate, especially when there are varied experience levels to help give background on their own situations.



Rob Lynch, DVM of PRODAIRY going over the steps in a fresh cow evaluation.

Cornell Cooperative Extension links the research and extension efforts at Cornell University, Cornell AgriTech, and 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.

SCNY Dairy & Field Crops Extension Program

Research Project Updates – Bale Grazing, NYFVI Manure Project, Beef x Dairy, and Precision Feed Management

Betsy Hicks, Area Dairy Management Specialist



Bale Grazing Pasture Walk January 10, 2026

USDA CIG: Bale Grazing

Four more participating farmers (two dairies in Cortland County and two beef farms in Tompkins County) were added to the project as Demonstration Farms, and bale grazed this winter. One of our Core Farms in Truxton hosted our “Second Ever Winter Bale Grazing Pasture Walk” in January, attended by over 50 people from across the state. A poster was also presented on the project by the main grant holder, University of Kentucky, at the American Forage and Grassland Council Annual Conference this winter. Core Farms will have more forage sampling done this growing season, and we plan to host a field day at one of the participating farms this summer.



Beef x Dairy Cross Cattle

NESARE: Beef x Dairy

The final stages of this project are approaching. The project team is finishing analysis and compiling results from the project, and the participating farmer is planning on hosting an outreach event at his farm to highlight the project results.

NYFVI: Evaluating the Sustainable Use of Manure Solids as Dairy Cattle Bedding

Seven farms in the SCNY region were enrolled in this grant project, four of which are dairies in Cayuga County. The three other farms represented are a heifer raiser, and two beef farms (2-Cayuga, 1-Tompkins). Farms received a winter assessment of cow lying time, cow comfort and facilities, and also were measured for greenhouse gas emissions. Data will be compiled and reported back to farms, and then a summer assessment will be completed on the same farms. An outreach event for dairies using separated solids is being planned for this summer on a participating dairy.



A very comfortable cow on manure solids bedding

Tioga County SWCD: Precision Feed Management

Four farms in Tioga County are working with Janice and Betsy to complete a Precision Feed Management Plan for their dairy. Winter feed samples, cow measurements and data points were taken for each farm to generate a Winter PFM plan. Another time point for spring and summer will be taken for farms to complete their yearly plan.

Precision Feed Management

A Best Management Practice—NRCS Feed Management (592)

Manipulating and controlling the quantity & quality of available nutrients, feedstuffs or additives fed to livestock, in order to:

- *Reduce nutrients in manure*
- *Improve animal performance*
- *Increase income over feed cost*
- *Reduce odor causing agents in manure*

Source: V Ishlar, Penn State



Winter Crop Meeting 2026 - Key Educational Themes

Janice Degni, Field Crop Specialist

The 2026 Winter Crop Meeting, held in Auburn and Dryden, delivered 2 full days of research-based education on emerging weed, insect, and disease pressures, innovations in plant breeding, livestock risk protection, and farmland loss to solar development. Through collaboration with Cornell specialists, industry partners, and Farm Credit East, the program equipped growers with practical strategies for managing herbicide resistant weeds, adapting to changing pest dynamics, preparing for potential neonic restrictions, and mitigating market volatility. Participants gained updated, actionable guidance to support profitable, resilient crop production, reinforcing Extension's role as a trusted source of applied agricultural expertise.

Advances in Crop Genetics & Technology Adoption

Ben Rogers (Pioneer Seed) highlighted the next generation of plant breeding and trait development in including reduced-stature corn, improved disease tolerance, and AI guided pest management decision tools. This forward-looking session helped growers prepare for coming innovations that will influence productivity and sustainability.



Managing Herbicide-Resistant Weeds

Dr. Vipan Kumar (Cornell) provided updated research on the rapid spread of resistant pigweeds, horseweed, and Italian ryegrass in

New York. His results from ongoing field trials equipped growers with integrated strategies and alternative chemistries to regain control of increasingly complex weed populations.

Risk Management Tools for Livestock Producers

KC Slade (Farm Credit East) explained the Livestock Risk Protection (LRP) program, helping producers understand how federal price insurance can mitigate the financial impacts of volatile livestock markets.

Corn Insect Management Without Neonics

Janice delivered a talk addressing environmental uncertainty around neonicotinoid seed treatments and introduced biological alternatives, including entomopathogenic nematodes. She emphasized integrated approaches for managing corn rootworm in light of declining trait efficacy.

Emerging Diseases in Corn & Soybeans

Dr. Camilo Parada Rojas (Cornell) provided updates on Tar Spot in NY corn and key soil borne diseases in soybeans, along with an overview of Southern Rust—an emerging threat in the Northeast. Proactive monitoring and updated diagnostic considerations were emphasized.



Agricultural Land Use & Solar Development

Michael McMahan (Homer Town Planning Board) engaged participants in a timely discussion on balancing farmland preservation with statewide renewable energy goals. His session highlighted the long-term implications of rapid solar development for dairy and field crop viability, particularly with the expansion of dairy processing capacity across the state increasing the demand for milk.

Impact

The 2026 Winter Crop Meeting strengthened the region's capacity to respond to:

- herbicide-resistant weeds,
- shifts in insect and disease pressure,
- regulatory changes affecting crop inputs,
- financial risk in livestock production, and
- growing land use pressures from solar development.

Producers left the program with actionable strategies for management, clearer expectations for future regulatory and technological shifts, and strengthened connections to Extension and Cornell resources.



2026 Winter Crop Management Meetings

Janice Degni, Field Crop Specialist

First Quarter Crop Management Meetings:

- Shop Meeting hosted by the Donald Grain Farm in Moravia
- Dairy Support Services Company Spring Safety Meeting
- Understanding the Benefits and Logistics of Dairy and Crop Farmer's Sharing Manure
- The Pioneer Seed® Crop Meeting.

The Donald Shop Meeting provided an integrated update on key regulatory and agronomic issues affecting New York field crop production, beginning with an overview of the Birds and the Bees legislation and the waiver process required for neonicotinoid seed treatments in NYS. It addressed current and emerging disease challenges in corn, soybean, and small grains, including corn aphid and corn stunt, tar spot in corn, disease thresholds, and fungicide use. The program also examined weed management challenges, focusing on identification of hard-to-control and herbicide-resistant weeds and recommendations for effective resistance management strategies. Finally, it highlighted the use of New York native entomopathogenic nematodes as a proven, persistent biological control option for corn rootworm, including efficacy across soil and environmental conditions and best practices for application.

The Dairy Support Services Company Trucking and Manure Handling Safety Meeting provided required and recommended training to support regulatory compliance, worker safety, and environmental protection in manure handling and transport operations. The program integrated occupational safety and health principles consistent with OSHA standards and environmental management practices aligned with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) CAFO requirements. Training began with a focus on stress management and fatigue awareness, recognizing human factors that can contribute to workplace incidents and safety violations. Environmental protection concepts were reinforced through a demonstration illustrating manure spill impacts on groundwater and surface water, supporting

compliance with SPDES permit conditions and discharge prevention requirements.

Participants reviewed CAFO manure management fundamentals, including winter and wet weather operating scenarios, and engaged in interactive exercises to determine what constituted a regulated discharge under DEC rules. Lessons learned from more than 20 years of CAFO inspections were discussed to highlight common violations, corrective actions, and spill response expectations, including hands-on spill response practice. The program also provided essential safety training in fire extinguisher operation, atmospheric gas monitoring, and confined space entry protocols, consistent with OSHA hazard communication, fire safety, and confined space standards.

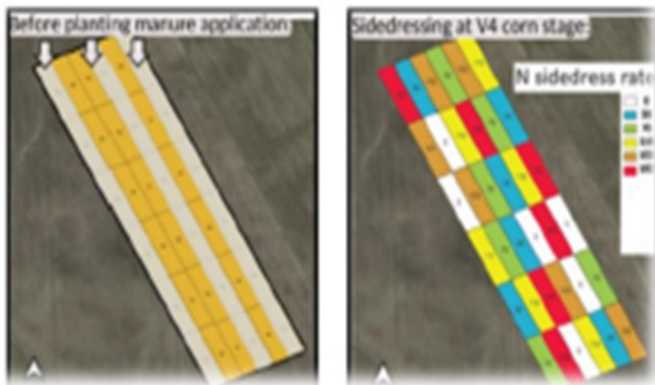


Manure 4-gas meter



This meeting equipped employees and contractors with the knowledge and practical skills necessary to maintain regulatory compliance, reduce risk, and safely perform manure handling and transportation activities.

Benefits and Logistics of Dairy and Crop Farmer's Sharing Manure



This meeting focused on the agronomic, economic, and management considerations that position manure as a valuable nutrient resource in crop production systems. The program emphasized practical manure nitrogen math to improve nutrient use efficiency and support sound nutrient management planning. A panel featured producers Doug Young, Spruce Haven Dairy; Todd DuMond, DuMond Farms and Brian Boerman, crop consultant with Ag Consulting Services, provided real world insight into receiving and exporting manure, demonstrating how manure can reduce commercial fertilizer costs while supporting soil health and crop productivity.

The meeting also addressed key business and operational considerations, including the role of contracts in clarifying responsibilities, budgets for accurately valuing manure nutrients and application costs, and recordkeeping practices necessary for tracking applications, supporting regulatory compliance, and demonstrating nutrient stewardship. Common barriers to manure utilization—such as logistics, communication, and nutrient balance concerns were discussed alongside strategies to overcome them.

Overall, the meeting reinforced manure's value as both an agronomic asset and a managed business input when supported by accurate planning, clear agreements, and effective documentation. A list of resources included links to crop budget spreadsheets, estimating farm machinery costs and custom rates, guidelines for pricing standing forage and corn silage, tables for determining high moisture corn value, contract feed production arrangements and considerations for contracting corn silage for your dairy.

The Pioneer Seed® Crop Meeting delivered a comprehensive update on seed technology, trait stewardship, pest management, and feed value optimization to support informed decision-making for upcoming crop seasons. Seedling insect identification and management, slug pressure considerations, and the implications of New York neonicotinoid restrictions were addressed to support risk based treatment decisions.

The expanding role of AI driven modeling tools in predicting pest pressure, supporting trait placement, and improving integrated pest management (IPM) decision making were highlighted. Discussion of Enlist®-enabled corn systems emphasized the value and mode of action of Pioneer's Bt trait packages, reinforcing the importance of stacked traits for durable insect protection. The advantages of Vorceed® and PowerCore® Enlist® technologies over legacy AM and Q Bt traits were reviewed, focusing on improved corn rootworm control, above ground insect protection, and their role within comprehensive IPM and stewardship programs.

Insect and weed control stewardship was addressed through discussion of aggressive, multi-resistant weed species, particularly marehail and waterhemp, and the continued importance of Enlist® weed control systems for effective resistance management.

Biological control options were also explored through a presentation on NY native entomopathogenic nematodes for corn rootworm management, with demonstrated efficacy across diverse soil conditions and best practices for application.

The meeting concluded with a focus on increasing feed value through silage and grain management. Topics included strategic use of Pioneer® Silage Inoculants such as CFT®, informed by prior year weather data and University of Wisconsin research, and the complementary role of TonnEdge®. Comparative performance of Plenish® high oleic oil soybeans was reviewed alongside harvest timing, late season plant health, and emerging trait based tools aimed at optimizing silage fermentation, feed quality, and harvest windows.



Jan. 10	Winter Bale Grazing Pasture Walk Topics: beef cattle grazing round bales strategically fed on pasture to improve pasture quality and productivity, realities of efficient winter feeding on pasture, while protecting soils and prioritizing animal welfare and performance. Truxton, NY	Betsy/Troy B	52p
Jan. 13- Feb 24	Boots in the Barn Webinar Series Cornell Dairy Research Update. Weekly on Tuesdays (7 sessions)	Betsy/PRODAIRY	~75p/ea
Jan 22	2026 Winter Crop Meeting - Auburn Topics: Emerging Innovation in Plant Breeding and Technologies, Managing Herbicide-Resistant Weeds in NY Corn & Soybean, Livestock Risk Protection, Birds and Bees Legislation, Emerging Disease Pests and Soil borne disease, and Solar Farms. Auburn, NY	Janice	45p
Jan 23	2026 Winter Crop Meeting - Dryden Topics: Emerging Innovation in Plant Breeding and Technologies, Managing Herbicide-Resistant Weeds in NY Corn & Soybean, Livestock Risk Protection, Birds and Bees Legislation, Emerging Disease Pests and Soil borne disease, and Solar Farms. Dryden, NY	Janice	60p
Feb 3	CCE Cayuga 2026 Winter Shop Meeting Topics discussed: Weed Strategies and Control Strategies, Neonicotinoid Seed Treatment Update Disease Issues in Field Crops, Biocontrol for Corn Rootworm. Moravia, NY	Janice	22p
Mar 11	Understanding the Benefit and Logistics of Dairy and Crop Farmers Sharing Manure Topics: Value of manure and manure nitrogen “math”, Producer-Planner Panel-receiving manure, exporting manure, impact on fertilizer rates, costs, barriers. collaborative effort among DuMonds, Spruce Haven, ACS, CCE Cayuga, Cornell CALS PRODAIRY, and SCDFC. Auburn, NY	Janice/Frank/Kirsten	18p
Mar 13	Dairy Support Services Company Spring Safety Meeting This meeting was targeted at both experienced and new farm workers and ag service contractors who are operating trucks and ag equipment while applying manure and harvesting crops. CAFO training credits were available. Cortland, NY	DSSC/Janice/PRODAIRY	120p
Mar 18	From Dry to Fresh -- Setting Up Cows for Success Topics covered were dry cow management, calving model demonstration, fresh cow health check ups and facility considerations. There were presentations and hands-on demonstrations on farm. Offered in both English and Spanish. Scipio Center, NY	Betsy/PRODAIRY	18p
Mar 19	2026 Ag Summit in Cortland to honor and celebrate National Ag Week. Award presentations and seminars: 1. Stress, Success and Succession and 2. Marketing Your Ag Business. Cortland Living History Museum	Committee of Ag Agency & BDC Representatives	79p
April 15	Beef Producer Roundtable: Herd Health Featuring speaker Dr. Adam Murray of PRO-LIVESTOCK presenting "Vaccination & Weaning Considerations, Including Cost of Disease to Beef Producers," offering practical insights into herd health management and the economic impacts of disease in beef operations.	Betsy/Kelly	

Anticipated Outcomes of our Extension Work

Our integrated Dairy and Field Crops Extension work provides whole-farm solutions that support economic stability, environmental sustainability, and community well-being across New York.

By aligning crop production with herd needs, improving feed efficiency, reducing waste, and strengthening the agricultural workforce, our programs help farms remain profitable while safeguarding natural resources. This collaborative, systems based support ensures a stable local food supply, strengthens rural economies, and promotes sustainable agriculture that benefits both producers and the public.

Our Dairy Extension programs strengthen the vitality of New York's rural communities by improving animal care, supporting farm profitability, and ensuring a safe, abundant local food supply.

Through bilingual workforce training, science based management guidance, and hands-on workshops, we help dairy farms adopt practices that enhance cow health, reduce losses, and keep family farms viable. This work promotes economic resiliency, supports local jobs, and ensures consumers have confidence in high-quality dairy products produced in their region.

Our Field Crops Extension programs protect environmental resources while helping farms improve efficiency, reduce input costs, and sustain productive farmland for future generations

By providing research based guidance on soil health, nutrient stewardship, forage quality, and crop system planning, we help farmers adopt practices that protect water quality, improve soil resilience, and optimize yields. This contributes to a stronger agricultural economy and environmental stewardship that benefits all residents of New York.

