

Quarterly Report Q1 2026



Dr. Heather Darby presenting on “Maximizing Forage Quality in High-Output Dairy & Beef Systems.”

- **4th Annual CCE NWNYS Dairy Day**
- **Climate-Smart Forage Systems: Forage Congress 2026**
- **Dry-to-Fresh Transition Cow Workshop**
- **Despite a Very Challenging Year, Growers Show Up at Crop Congresses**

4th Annual CCE NWNY Dairy Day

CCE NWNY Dairy Day is held each year to gather farmers, farm managers, local extension educators and allied industry members who are interested in hot-button issues, implementable ideas and practical research that contributes to the resilience of the dairy farm business in the NWNY region. This year's 4th Annual one-day conference, held on February 5, 2026, at The Chalet at East Hill Creamery in Perry, NY attracted 30 NWNY farmers and agri-service industry members from 5 NWNY counties, and 2 other counties from 2 states.

Team member, Margaret Quaassdorff, introduced a new topic, "AI-Artificial Intelligence for Dairy" focusing on what AI is, and what it is not, and provided examples of the most common ways it shows up on dairy farm operations. She also shared new opportunities, workshops, and projects happening for, and with farms around the region. Included in that presentation was a short demonstration of the calving model that is available for training use across the region.

Dr. Marcos Marcondes of the William H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute in Chazy, NY shared updates regarding the impact of fat level in calf milk replacers and strategies to improve the nutrition in dairy youngstock. He was joined by PhD Researcher, Isabela Carrari also of Miner Institute to discuss her research on dairy cow nutrition and metabolism and work on the mitigation of enteric methane emissions. Attendees networked and swapped experiences over the lunch hour. Lunch was catered locally and featured freshly bottled milk from a nearby value-added on-farm dairy processor. The program closed with a panel discussion and question and answer session where speakers



and attendees discussed nuances of AI, how it is being used, and could be used, in research, on farms and in industry, including the importance of keeping good records and securing data.

Farmers participated in discussions and networked with sponsors, peers, and industry experts throughout the day. From the presentations, participants benefited from strategies to guide their farm businesses through new technology options and management ideas. The program was interactive and multiple participants reported wanting to learn more about the opportunities for elevated management of their dairies that AI could afford. Other participants mentioned they would be looking forward to seeing more of the practical implications of improving the nutritional management of calves on their farms.

Climate-Smart Forage Systems: Forage Congress 2026

The NWNY Dairy, Livestock & Field Crops Team successfully hosted the 2026 Forage Congress at The Nunda Ranch, convening 43 agricultural producers, industry professionals, and stakeholders for a focused, high-impact educational program centered on climate-smart forage systems.

This year's Congress was intentionally designed to address the increasing variability in weather patterns and the growing need for resilient, adaptive forage production strategies across Western New York. The program delivered a forward-looking yet agronomically grounded framework, emphasizing the integration of perennial forage systems with strategic use of annuals to improve flexibility, productivity, and risk management.

A highlight of the event was the participation of outstanding keynote speakers who brought national expertise and practical insight to the discussion. Presentations emphasized:

- Climate adaptation strategies for forage systems
- Soil health as the foundation of resilient production
- Nutrient management approaches to improve efficiency and reduce risk
- The role of alternative and annual forages in buffering against weather variability

The setting at The Nunda Ranch provided a unique and engaging environment that fostered meaningful discussion, peer-to-peer learning, and strong connection between producers and Extension specialists. The venue aligned well with the program's mission of bridging science-based knowledge with real-world agricultural application.

Participant engagement was strong throughout the day, with attendees actively contributing to discussions around challenges and opportunities within their own operations. Feedback indicated a high level of satisfaction with both the technical depth of the content and its direct applicability to farm decision-making in the region.

This program reflects the NWNY Team's continued commitment to delivering timely, research-based education that equips producers with the tools and strategies needed to navigate an increasingly complex production environment while maintaining productivity, profitability, and environmental stewardship.



Left to Right: Dr. Chris Teutsch, Jodi Letham, Dr. Amanda Grey, Dr. James Rogers

Dry-to-Fresh Transition Cow Workshop

There are proper techniques for monitoring cows in the maternity area of the farm, as well as assisting them through a difficult calving, and providing proper post-partum care. Dairy farm employees are typically responsible for carrying out these duties. These employees should receive specific training in these areas to successfully maintain a healthy herd, and to adhere to best management practices and regulatory requirements. On March 12th, twenty Northwest NY dairy farmers and farmworkers and agriservice providers from 6 farms and industry businesses, representing 5 counties attended the 1-day on-farm “Dry to Fresh- Transition Cow Workshop” at a host farm in Albion, NY. The goal of this workshop was to teach Spanish or English-speaking “boots on the ground” employees proper techniques for transition cow care and management. Using a life-like cow and calf model, participants were able to identify high-risk cows and scenarios during the calving process, and practice repositioning several common malposition with the model calf. They also gained hands-on practice in performing a post-partum cow



examination on host farm cows. This included an evaluation of vital signs, observation of cow attitude and behavior, as well as proper technique for collecting blood and urine samples for analysis. From a post-workshop survey, all participants reported an increase in their level of knowledge in the two focus areas of the training. Participants also reported that the workshop was very hands-on, and that the explanation, demonstration, and ability to practice were helpful to their learning. One participant also commented that they also learned from listening to the questions and experiences from other participants. All participants successfully completed the training and were given a certificate of completion that can be used as proof of training for their farms' respective animal care requirements and protocols.

Despite a Very Challenging Year, Growers Show Up at Crop Congresses

This past year was a rough one for NWNY growers. A very wet beginning and a drought ending resulted in record low corn and soybean yields for many farms in the region. Corn Congress (Jan. 14) and Soybean & Small Grains Congress (Feb. 11) were two great opportunities for the agricultural community to come together during the winter to learn from each other and expert speakers on how to be better prepared for adverse conditions in the future.

This year's crop congresses looked at addressing good agronomic practices, adapting to weather changes and new pest issues while providing great advice on how to succeed in 2026. We had corn, soybean and wheat specialists from Ohio State, Canada and Michigan along with Cornell staff, graduate students and faculty. Forty different industry sponsors set up booths or supported our programs and educated growers about their new products.

Over 400 participants attended the two congresses. Participants learned valuable agronomic tips for growing better crops, herbicide resistance strategies, insect and disease management updates, and climate change and crop resiliency options. There was also a wheat grower panel from Michigan and Canada who visited the UK and shared what wheat tips they learned and will incorporate on their farms. Attendees continued to praise how good the program was and enjoyed visiting the exhibitor booths. Over half the attendees needed their DEC pesticide applicator credits and received 3.5 if they attended both meetings. We are already planning our 2027 programs.

