



Cornell Cooperative Extension

South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Program

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

APRIL - JUNE 2026



Janice Degni, Regional Extension Field Crops Specialist

As of 2024, neonicotinoid insecticides remain the most widely used class of insecticides globally. They are also most commonly applied as seed treatments. While neonicotinoids are effective in insect pest management, they pose risks to groundwater, pollinators, non-target organisms, and aquatic invertebrates. Concerns over these non-target risks led to the passage of the Birds and Bees Protection Act in New York State in 2023. -NYS IPM Program

Cornell Integrated Pest Management, Cornell University's Department of Entomology, and Cornell Cooperative Extension, with support from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, have launched the largest on-farm field research and extension project in program history. The project is designed to better understand, identify, and support the transition away from neonicotinoid insecticide seed treatments in conjunction with the [New York State Birds and Bees Protection Act](#). Corn and soybean growers from more than 80 farms across New York State are participating in the trials, which aim to determine where and when there is a significant risk of pest damage; aid in the development and deployment of a seed pest risk assessment tool; and test and demonstrate IPM alternatives, including the viability of not using insecticide seed treatments.



Mid-season corn in an on-farm trial



Early corn growth

As Janice has reported in the past, she is currently managing 10 on-farm research sites across the region including Broome, Cortland, Tompkins and Tioga County farm cooperators. In the spring the project commences when the plots are planted. Field data collection begins the following week when we begin digging seeds to assess damage from seed corn maggot. Data collection across the treatments includes population counts to assess stand loss and fresh biomass collection. The work could not be completed in a timely manner without the help of Kelly Ann Jackson, Ag educator in Tioga County, filling a technician role with the project. I am glad to have the opportunity to contribute to this important statewide collaboration. Her help was imperative for erecting six weather stations this spring, for cooperators.

The NYS Birds and the Bees legislation places restrictions on neonicotinoid seed treatments because of their effects on pollinators and beneficial insects. A goal of this on-going research aims to identify effective and environmentally responsible pest control options. These findings will assist growers in making informed pest management decisions in the future.



On-farm weather station



Optimizing Management of Manure Solids Bedding – Farm Tour at Belltown Dairy

Betsy Hicks, Area Dairy Management Specialist

As an outreach effort for the NYFVI-funded grant project, “Evaluating the Sustainable Use of Manure Solids as Dairy Cattle Bedding”, the SCNY team and PRO-DAIRY hosted an on-farm workshop at Belltown Dairy on June 17th in King Ferry, Cayuga County. Farms looking for practical strategies to improve dairy bedding management while boosting manure system efficiency were invited to join the tour to learn about the project and see how Belltown Dairy uses manure solids. This tour highlighted real world management practices and on farm experiences focused on using manure solids as dairy cattle bedding, as shared by farm manager Adam Kennedy. Team members Jason Oliver, Karrigan Ellison, Lindsay Ferlito and Betsy Hicks discussed preliminary research insights from the project. The tour focused on:

- Manure solids bedding management: Preparation, handling and daily best practices
- Nutrient and environmental considerations: Balancing performance with stewardship
- Separation technologies: Equipment options and system optimization
- Cow comfort and herd health: Impacts on wellbeing and barn environment.
- Farm tour demonstrations: Seeing bedding systems operating on farm

Whether farms who attended already use manure solids bedding or are evaluating it for future adoption, this tour delivered valuable insights for the 27 farmers, advisors, and industry professionals there. Discussion and thoughts shared by attendees are often most valuable, as real world application matches research questions.





Building Ag Awareness with Youth

Janice Degni, Regional Extension Field Crop Specialist

Two events that highlight agriculture are AgStravaganza for county fourth graders and the EZ Acres Dairy Farm Visit for county fifth graders engaging over 600 students at the two events.

AgStravaganza highlights a broad range of agricultural production with 11 stations including Where's the Beef, Got Dairy Cows, Little Farm Friends, Field-Tastic Fun, Just an Apple a Day, What's the Buzz with Honey, Ah, Maple Syrup production, the Dirt on Dirt, Hay there Horses, and Seed to Snack.

Betsy hosts the *Where's the Beef?* station where she challenges the students to match products in everyday life to what part of a cow it was made from. Students learn that not only fun things like cosmetics and chalk are made from byproducts of beef production, but also really important things like medicine use parts of a cow that humans don't eat. After matching pictures of byproducts to the part of the cow, students get to learn about where their favorite cut of beef comes from on a cow. They are challenged to locate that cut on a cow silhouette with a stamp of the name of that cut. In addition to these topics, students learn the differences between beef and dairy cows and learn how to recognize which cow might be used for what purpose.



Janice hosts the Field-Tastic Station with an extensive display of locally grown hay species, and grains like corn and soybean. Students participated in field crop knowledge challenges with a game of questions and answers. The conversion of local crops to livestock feeds were displayed and observed using several senses including site, smell and touch.

At the EZ Acres Dairy Farm Tour students learn about nine unique areas of the farm including: 1) Milking area and milkhouse; 2) Free Stall Barn and it's role in cow comfort; 3) the role of the hoof trimmer and its

importance a cow's overall well-being, as it affects how they walk, stand, and even how much they eat; 4) Calf raising; 5) Environmental Manure Storage and the recycling of nutrient rich manure to crops to support farm sustainability; 6) Equipment used daily to care for the cows and maintain the farm; 7) Hospital barn and maternity area; 8) Heifer Barn showing how farmers group cows in a dairy herd and 9) Bunker Silo and Commodity Shed, the center of feed storage and livestock diets.





Supporting Beef Farmers, in Collaboration with CCE Tioga, NY Beef Producers Association and Cornell PRO-LIVESTOCK

Betsy Hicks, Area Dairy Management Specialist

Beef farmers are a growing population in our region. Many of these farmers have off-farm jobs, and in order to reach them, outreach needs to occur outside of the normal workday. In support of reaching these farmers, the SCNY team, CCE Tioga and the NY Beef Producers Association teamed up to offer a nighttime roundtable program focusing on herd health and farm transition. Kelly Jackson of CCE Tioga kicked off the meeting to the over 30 participants with a short presentation on land access, land leasing, and succession planning. This talk highlighted important considerations for both current and future farm operators, and shared several resources for farmers to use after the meeting. Cornell PRO-LIVESTOCK's beef specialist, Dr Adam Murray, gave the main presentation for the evening, focusing on herd health, the importance of vaccinations, and costs of

respiratory disease. The meeting served as NYBPA's Region 6 annual meeting, and included ample time for discussion with both presenters and attendees alike.

Participants included beef farmers from Tioga, Cortland, Chemung, Chenango, Schuyler, Tompkins and Broome Counties, 4H members in Tioga County, and other ag industry professionals. Collaboration across associations is a powerful way to reach many farmers, provide information on timely topics, and resources to help with decision-making.



Dr. Adam Murray, Beef Specialist

Spring and Summer Meetings

April 15	Beef Producer Roundtable: Herd Health	Betsy/Kelly	Owego
June 17	Optimizing Management of Manure Solids and Bedding - On-Farm Tour	Pro-Dairy/SCNY Team	
	On-farm tour included an overview of the solids separation process at Belltown, and a walk through the facilities using the solids as bedding for lactating dairy cattle.		
			King Ferry
July 16	Beef x Dairy Finishing - On Farm Tour	Centerstate Cattle Co./Betsy/Margaret Q.	
	Findings from a NE SARE funded project assessing health, efficiency and profitability of growing and finishing Beef x Dairy cattle on a New York Feedlot were reported.		
			Auburn
July 17	Silvopasture Walk —This on-farm event was a collaboration between Twin Oaks Dairy, American Farm Land Trust, SCNY, CCE Tompkins Co., National Grazing Land Coalition, Cortland County SWCD, NOFA-NY and the Dairy Grazing Alliance. Twin Oaks showcased their 2021 silvopasture planting.		
July 28	Managing the Waterhemp Invasion in Corn and Soybeans. A Twilight Meeting to view herbicide treatments. Growers and Industry representatives observed effective preemergence and postemergence applied herbicides for controlling waterhemp in Enlist soybeans and Roundup Ready corn, lead by Dr. Vipin Kumar, NYS Extension Weed Scientist..		
Aug 6	Virtual Fence and Bale Grazing Pasture Walk	Betsy/Troy	Cortland
Aug 22	Tompkins County Beef Pasture Walk	SCNYDFC/Tompkins SWCD	
Sept. 2	Ward & VanScoy Corn Plot Day	SCNYDFC	Newark Valley
Sept. 2	Livestock Pasture Walk Broome County	SCNYDFC/Maisie	Nineveh
Sept. 25	Bale Grazing Pasture Walk	Betsy	

This walk is part of a National USDA-NRCS CIG Grant by the University of Kentucky Research Foundation entitled: Bale Grazing: A Practical, Low-Cost, and Environmentally-Sound Management Strategy to Winter Beef Cattle. The project partner states are Kentucky, New York, North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia. You can learn more by visiting <https://news.ca.uky.edu/article/usda-innovation-grant-bale-grazing-study->