



Educational Activities



NYS Soil & Water Conservation Districts Boot Camp

Conducted the majority of one day of on-the-farm training for new and relatively new Soil & Water Conservation District employees from across the state. This was a multi-day training that was based out of SUNY Cobleskill for approximately 20 people. The majority of these people have degrees in environmental science and/or soils, but have little if any actual farm production experience. In addition to the training day, a pre-training day was spent visiting the farms to become familiar with their business and facilities. (Balbian, Ganoe)

Spring Forage Quality Monitoring

For the past 8 years the Central New York Dairy and Field Crops team has monitored the quality of first cutting hay crop in the field to give producers a better idea of when they should begin harvest. More people ask to be added to the email list as interest in this effort continues to grow every year. This year we tracked 54 fields in Chenango, Herkimer, Madison, Otsego, and Schoharie Counties with help from the Madison County CCE staff. In this unusual year we found some straight grass fields were ready to harvest the 1st week of May. Because of our data & input these fields were harvested on time.

Soybean Scouting and Monitoring

Six producers are participating in a scouting program to monitor soybean insect and disease pests during the growing season. Soil samples are taken on fields to look for any soil fertility issues and plant populations are measured. The goal of this program is to look for areas that producers might improve upon to increase profits.

Emerging Issues and Individual Assistance

Armyworm and Potato Leafhoppers

Armyworms have been found statewide and although their numbers locally are not as large as western NY there has been the potential to cause damage in some fields. Most damage appears to have been to grass hay fields and to a small number of corn fields. Two areas that appeared to be hardest hit in particular were southeastern Chenango county and a larger area along the Jordanville Road area in Herkimer County. Two emails were sent to our CNYDFC list server to alert crop growers and ag industry personnel specifically on the presence of armyworms and articles appeared in. The team responded to email and phone call requests for more information and to check fields for armyworms damage.



Common Armyworm

Potato leafhoppers arrived earlier than usual to our area and are causing damage in local alfalfa fields. These insects are small and not as easy to detect. Potato leafhoppers tend to be more of an issue in warmer, drier years because they reproduce more rapidly and the alfalfa growth slows so they cause more damage between cuttings. Growers were alerted to their presence through the Checking the Back 40 newsletter. Again the team responded to questions about this pest through emails, phone call and farm visits.



Potato Leafhopper

Corn Planting Issues

Received requests to look at corn fields which had problems with poor emergence or loss of plants. There was a consistent theme of corn planters not placing the seed deep enough in the soil and being covered with soil to prevent loss due to birds picking up the seed. Although this appears to be a bird damage issue it is really an issue of placing seed deep enough the birds can not pull it out of the ground. This seeding depth of greater than 1.5 inches is also the ideal seed placement for allowing good root growth to occur. Quite often this occurred where planters were being use do plant seed without tillage (notill). This issue will receive particular programming attention in the coming year as this is a major source of yield loss.

Dairy Nutrition

Requests for assistance with dairy nutrition have increased over last quarter because grain prices have moved even higher and milk prices have moved even lower. Many precision feeding strategies were recommended to individual producers, including balancing diets for amino acids. (Balbian)

Ventilation

The hot and humid weather brought about several requests for individual assistance with ventilation issues. All were solvable and I provided recommendations in each instance. Also had a request for assessing free stall & tie stall design. Recommended changes to the tie stalls. (Balbian)

Weather Impact on Crop Production

Alfalfa and grass started growing in March in 2012 due to warm temperatures. However alfalfa in particular was stunted by deep freezes in April after spring growth had begun. Alfalfa stands were severely hurt by these freezes to the point of weakening and killing plants. Many older alfalfa stands that have little forage grasses now are mostly weeds and white clover not helping the need for forage production on dairy farms.

Continued dry weather is driving up grain prices, while milk prices are down. This is creating a severe economic squeeze on dairy producers. In addition, some producers affected by last year's crop damage due to flooding and wind have been looking to this season to rebuild forage inventories. The dry weather will not allow that to happen and will only worsen the feed availability situation. (Balbian, Ganoe)

Newsletters and Media

Produced six editions of *Checking the Back Forty* newsletters. Focused on pest issues such as armyworm, potato leafhopper and weather related issues. (Ganoe)

The Central New York Dairy News went out twice (snail mail and email). Topics covered included info on current economics in dairy production, the huge economic benefits to making high quality forage, balancing diets for Amino Acids, the new 400,000 SCC rule, how to prepare your herd for hot weather, solutions to forage shortfalls, an announcement for upcoming on-farm fly control meetings, and reasons why the northeast dairy industry has not met the call for huge increases in milk output to meet the ever increasing demand that the Greek Yogurt industry has created. (Balbian)

Current Projects and Grants

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Precision Feed Management and Corn Nitrogen Management Grants

Continued work with on the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation precision feed management and corn nitrogen management grants through the Upper Susquehanna Coalition.

- Continue work with 6-8 participating farms and their nutrition consultants on the adoption of Amino Acid balancing. This change should lead to more efficient use of nitrogen in milk production resulting in higher profitability and reduced environmental risk. Planning a July 25th meeting to address this issue with Dr. Chuck Schwab from Wisconsin and Dr. Larry Chase from Cornell and Ryan Higgs, who is a Dairy Science PhD Student studying this very issue. (Jerauld, Balbian)
- Ran Adapt N nitrogen modeling program on farms that are in their second year and some first year farms new to the program to find optimal nitrogen rates (Schmidt, Wilkinson, Ganoë)

NY State IPM program grants

The team received a \$3,004 grant to look at the use of fungicides to control corn diseases and reduce the production of mycotoxins when corn is harvested for corn silage. (Ganoë, Wilkinson)

Sclerotinia white mold control demonstrations

The team received enough material from the manufacture of Contans® biological fungicide to put out two test plots on each of two farms for Sclerotinia White Mold control with. (Ganoë, Wilkinson)

Professional Development

Attended a one day seminar in Oneonta about the 400,000 SCC rule put on by QMPS (Quality Milk Production Services). They explained how they are going to be assisting producers who are having difficulty meeting this new standard. (Balbian)

Attended the Small Grains Field Day at the Musgrave Research Farm. The field day shows current research on small grains being conducted at the farm.

Next Quarter and Future Activities

Continue with *The Central New York Dairy News* (Balbian) and *Checking the Back 40* (Ganoë)

Submit grant to New York Farm Viability Institute for funds to test barley varieties for malting characteristics. A new "Farm Brewery" category has been established and local breweries wishing to capitalize on that license will need to use NY grown ingredients including malted barley.

NFWF Precision Feed Management and Corn Nitrogen Management Grants

- With interested Precision Feeding participants, pursue education & implementation of Amino Acid balanced rations. (Jerauld, Balbian)
- Collect Corn Stalk NitrateTest samples in all corn fields to be harvested for silage. (Schmidt, Wilkinson, Ganoë)

No-till tour in August (Ganoë Wilkinson,)

Working with Pro Dairy to conduct another DairyFAST program. (Balbian)