



# Cornell Cooperative Extension

## South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Program

### 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

PROGRAM AREA	Number of Events	Total Attended
Agricultural & Horticultural Business Vitality	2	144
Business Planning & Financial Management	13	547
Dairy & Crop Production and Management	16	528
Educating the Public about Agriculture	13	6,182
Human Resource Management	4	55
Management and Finance for Dairy & Crops	1	17
Organic Dairy & Field Crop Production & Marketing	2	693
Soil Health	5	695
Supporting Environmental Stewardship	3	157
Sum Total	59	9,018

*We work to help producers meet their goals and enhance dairy farm profitability to maintain a strong dairy industry in the region.*

### SCNY Dairy & Field Crops Extension Program

The South Central NY Dairy & Field Crops Program provides educational opportunities and technical assistance to help the industry with emerging issues, production bottlenecks, and new technologies. Our primary audiences are dairy and field crop producers as well as agri-service providers with secondary audiences of the media, non-farm residents and consumers. We focus on areas that will help improve farm profitability within the region since farm financial success is a key to maintaining a viable dairy and field crops industry. Our program's education helps our industry respond to both internal and external forces that help it keep pace in a rapidly changing world.

#### Our Mission:

**Enhance the profitability of farmers to maintain a strong regional dairy industry**

**Create greater awareness of trends and options to help producers achieve family and business goals**

**Maintain environmentally responsible agricultural practices**

**Encourage a better understanding of agriculture by the general community**

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



## **Business Management Education Enhances Planning & HR Skills**

### *Mary Kate Wheeler, Farm Business Management Specialist*

Farmers need accurate information about business performance to make good decisions. We educate and support producers to improve record keeping systems, and we facilitate participation in financial benchmarking programs. Access to financial data helps producers make sound financial decisions and plan for the future.

Farmers are scrambling to keep up with new NYS labor laws as employees are becoming harder to find. Our team supports farms to implement employee onboarding and other HR best practices, including compliance with new sexual harassment prevention regulations. Improving labor management on farms has potential to boost employee performance while reducing liability.



## **Crop Management Education Supports Profitability & Sustainability**

### *Janice Degni, CCE Field Crop Specialist*

Forage quality remains a key driver of production and profitability on dairy farms, and it can often be improved with low- or no-cost solutions. Our team delivers training and support for dairies to produce adequate forage quantity and quality. Through workshops and individual consultations, our Field Crops Specialist educates producers on current



trends and technologies, Integrated Pest Management, and nutrient management, all within a broader framework of economic viability and environmental stewardship.

Our field crops program also covers industrial hemp, NY's newest crop. We provide technical expertise to help producers cultivate hemp and navigate the permitting process.



## **Dairy Management Education Targets Herd Health & Performance**

### *Betsy Hicks, Area Dairy Management Specialist*

98% of US dairy farms participate in the FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) Program. These producers must meet animal welfare standards and ensure that employees receive animal care training. Our team helps farmers keep up with industry standards by organizing herd health and management trainings. On-farm workshops provide hands-on opportunities for farm operators and their employees to learn and practice key skills.

Our Dairy Specialist also works one-on-one with individual farms to improve facilities and procedures. Benchmarking facility measurements and other animal welfare indicators helps farmers to identify opportunities for improvement.



## Public Outreach Enhances Consumer Perceptions of Agriculture

### *South Central Dairy & Field Crops Team*

Community relations are a growing concern for farmers, who face increasing public scrutiny. Public



perception of agriculture shapes consumer preferences, regulations, and evolving industry standards. These, in turn, may affect production practices and requirements for market entry.

Our team supports outreach events that bring consumers onto dairy farms to learn about the industry. We also provide public relations training for farmers, and teach them how to be “ag-vocates” for themselves and their industry.



### **On-farm Trainings Offer Demonstrations, Farm Tours and Opportunities for Hands-On Learning**

#### *Betsy Hicks, Area Dairy Management Specialist*

Specialized programs are needed to educate our producers, but specialists in the past have often duplicated efforts in workshops. Current needs recognized by regional dairy specialists as being important include neonatal calf care, stockmanship and general herd management.

This year, Calving & Neonatal Training provided herd managers two days of training that focused on the maternity pen and the first days of life of a newborn calf. Held on-farm, the demonstrations and farm tour included examination of a cow in labor, overview of records maintained, examination of newborn calf, and tour of different maternity pens at both farms. Herd veterinarians offered their expertise both days, and fielded myriad questions from the participants.

Dairy Manager Training, also a two day program, focused on skills such as communication with people and animals, cattle handling, facility management for profitability, and heifer management. Working through the thought process of making a change in a facility and doing a partial budget on that change was a big focus for the second day of training and surprisingly had a great deal of discussion among participants. On-farm portions of this training included demonstration of cattle handling by world-renown stockman Curt Pate, and a tour of the heifer program at EZ Acres focusing on management and tracking average daily gain.

Both of these trainings were held at various locations around NY, and the joint effort of putting on a program allows the regional Dairy Specialists to pull in great speakers such as Curt Pate by splitting the cost between programs. Conversations with producers months after the cattle handling demonstration shows the lasting impact that this program had. Producers are utilizing information from the program in their daily lives to work with their cattle more effectively and efficiently, as well as safely.







## Lying Time and Lameness in Tiestall Dairy Facilities

### *Betsy Hicks, Area Dairy Management Specialist*

Farms that utilize tiestall facilities are generally smaller farms that have historically been underserved by industry. In addition, cow size has been growing in recent years, and farmers know they need to make updates in their facilities in order to make them more comfortable for their cows. Research, however, in tie stall facilities is limited. This project aimed to focus on tie stall farms and give them data specific to their farms in order to make improvements in cow comfort.



NYFVI funded two waves of this project. The grant projects, started in spring 2017 and wrapping up in summer 2019, had twenty-two herds participate in the process. Farms received an initial assessment of cow factors and facility factors, and were given a report comparing their results to a benchmark average of other herds. Farms then designed a plan to improve some aspect of their operation, and were offered the option to have a reassessment after making changes. The project also had several outreach components, as it was highlighted at the Cow Comfort Conference in winter 2018, the NYFVI annual meeting in November 2018, a local feed mill's annual customer appreciation day in Spring 2019, a Hoard's Dairyman Webinar in summer 2019, and

Empire Farm Days in August 2019. Hoard's Dairyman also

published an article on the project, as well as Progressive Dairyman and American Agriculturist. On-farm workshops in both Northern NY and SCNY were held, and provided benchmark data as well as teaching participants the measurements in their own facilities that are important to evaluate. A YouTube video about the project was put together, and has been viewed on social media over 5,400 times since its release in December 2018.

Farmers surveyed stated, "I thought it was great. Even though you're with your cows all the time, you don't know everything about them, for example lying time" and "the project was definitely beneficial". Several producers also commented that it provided them with farm-specific details that they could improve upon, instead of broad industry standards. Other stated that the lying time data showed them that renovations they had already completed were the correct improvements and felt better about continuing to invest in facilities. The projects' impact on local producers is documented by their capital investment in facilities, even through this period of low milk price, and has been able to reach a broader audience through the greater outreach of conferences, presentations, articles and social media. In all, it was a successful program that will continue to have impact through the benchmark created and further outreach.



## Team Event Coverage in the Ag Press

Country Folks



HOARD'S DAIRYMAN



**A Closer Look at Tiestall Comfort** <https://hoards.com/article-25535-a-closer-look-at-tie-stall-comfort.html>

**Act Soon to Protect Your Milk Prices** <https://hoards.com/article-25529-act-soon-to-protect-your-milk-prices.html>

**Cornell's Industrial Hemp Research Team—Agriculture** <https://www.ithacaweek-ic.com/a-closer-look-at-cornells-industrial-hemp-research-team/>

**Rate Your Recordkeeping** <https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/2020/01/rate-your-recordkeeping-system/>

**Study finds loophole puts organic dairies at a disadvantage when raising heifers** <https://www.progressivedairy.com/news/industry-news/study-finds-loophole-puts-organic-dairies-at-a-disadvantage-when-raising-heifers>

**Traveling Trailer Teaches Soil Health** [https://www.lancasterfarming.com/news/northern\\_edition/traveling-trailer-teaches-soil-health/article\\_80bbf926-26f4-5cbb-94c0-792f6555803f.html?utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=email&utm\\_campaign=user-share](https://www.lancasterfarming.com/news/northern_edition/traveling-trailer-teaches-soil-health/article_80bbf926-26f4-5cbb-94c0-792f6555803f.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=user-share)

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