Team Members Shine at National
Extension Meeting  by Libby Eiholzer

Libby Eiholzer’s newsletter, The Dairy Culture Coach, took home a National Award for individual newsletters. She also was a National Finalist in the category for the computer-generated presentation category (a.k.a Power Point presentation with a script). Libby’s entry was “How Does Your Farm Culture Measure Up?” which she presented at the Operations Managers Conference last winter. Both the newsletter and presentation focus on helping dairy farmers improve communication and promote a better workplace culture on their farms. Issues of The Dairy Culture Coach are available on our website here: https://nwnyteam.cce.cornell.edu/topic.php?id=13.

Margaret Quaassdorff’s newsletter article “Farm Fire Prevention” won the award in the feature story category for the Northeast Region. She wrote this article in response to the many barn fires that are reported every year, especially during the winter

(Continued on page 3)
Team Members Shine at National Extension Meeting

(Continued from page 1)

season. Check out this excellent, and timely, article on our website: https://nydairyadmin.cce.cornell.edu/pdf/newsletter/pdf198_pdf.pdf.

Joan Petzen was the New York State winner for the Search for Excellence in Farm and Ranch Financial Management. She submitted her work on the Landowners and Farmers Partnering for Clean Water in the Great Lakes Project, which targets women non-operating landowners and the farmers who rent their land.

While we don’t like to brag, we thought you should know that your Extension team is producing educational materials that win awards at a national level!

Margaret showing off her first NACAA award for her feature story titled “Farm Fire Prevention.” Photos provided by Libby Eiholzer.

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Upcoming Webinars

December 9, 2019 - Noon (CST)
Feeding cows to reach their peak
Bill Weiss, The Ohio State University

December 10, 2019 - 8:30am (EST)
Precision Feeding Technology
Mat Haan, Penn State
https://extension.psu.edu/technology-tuesdays

December 16, 2019 - 1:00PM (EST)
Mortality composting: let’s do it right
Craig Williams, Penn State
https://extension.psu.edu/dairy-management-mondays

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**Cow Comfort Workshops**

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<tr>
<th>For Freestalls on December 2</th>
<th>For Tiestalls on December 10</th>
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<td><strong>Mulligan Farms, 5403 Barber Rd., Avon, NY</strong></td>
<td><strong>Daryl Z. Martin’s Farm, 2086 Havens Corners Rd., Penn Yan, NY</strong></td>
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<td>9:30am - 3:00pm</td>
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<td>Resister by November 27 to Brandie Waite at: 585-343-3040 x138 or <a href="mailto:bls238@cornell.edu">bls238@cornell.edu</a></td>
<td>Resister by December 3 to Brandie Waite at: 585-343-3040 x138 or <a href="mailto:bls238@cornell.edu">bls238@cornell.edu</a></td>
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<td>Register online at: <a href="https://nwnyteam.cce.cornell.edu/events.php">https://nwnyteam.cce.cornell.edu/events.php</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost for NWNY Team enrollees $20 pre-registration or $25 day of event. Non-enrollees $30 pre-registration or $35 day of event.</td>
<td>This FREE program is only possible because of the generous support of the NY Farm Viability Institute, ABS, Keystone Mills, Select Sires, Trouw Nutrition and Eastview Veterinary Clinic.</td>
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The Cow Comfort Workshop is an educational program for farmers, employees and agriservice professionals who work directly with dairy cows. Each session will include an on-farm portion where attendees walk through the farm and complete an assessment.

The Cow Comfort Workshop is a day-long program held from 9:30 am to 3 pm. The program will be held on farm with a combination of presentations, demonstrations, farm walk-throughs and discussion.

---

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Ask Extension: Why Aren’t my Grass-Finished Carcass Weights Adding Up?
by Nancy Glazier

I had a beef producer ask myself and Brett Chedzoy, a colleague in CCE Schuyler why his carcass yields were low this year. Brett and I provided some possible explanations. There are a lot of variables and no straightforward answers.

Some of the backstory to this question, the producer purchases yearlings and grazes them through the grazing season. They may end the season on pasture with supplemental hay or if pasture runs out solely fed quality hay. They are slaughtered at a USDA processor and sold to customers. Slaughter dates are reserved at least a year in advance.

Work for gain. First off, it was a wet grazing season, which led to ‘washy’ feed. Pastures were lush, high protein, and low in fiber to slow the passage rate. Some medium quality dry hay available in pastures may have helped with this. Keep the rotation short, moving every three days or less. Don’t overstock your pastures! September thru December is the critical period for finishing them off, assuming enough grass is there. The post killing frost grass of October, November and December is the best grass of the year for finishing as it becomes less washy; Brett believes it has a better sugar to protein ratio. If pastures run out, then feed some very high quality baleage or hay. Have the forage analyzed to measure protein and energy. At this stage you want to maintain good gain, at least 1.5 lbs. a day. Have water in every paddock to reduce energy expenditure. Collect periodic weights, as it is important to keep track of live weights through the season with a harvest deadline.

Slaughter when finished. This is a tough one when slaughter dates are reserved far in advance. The producer was not raising to true finish prior to slaughter, but his customers were happy with a tender, lean, product. Yield will be lower with these. From all I’ve gathered, you are better off holding them longer than sending them sooner than finished. A quality grass-finished steer may take 22-27 months to finish; a heifer may take at least 20 or more months. The goal is well marbled meat; this will take longer when grain is not fed.

Source smaller framed cattle. Consider the mature size of the cattle you are looking to finish. Moderate framed cattle will finish sooner than larger framed ones. Finished cattle will be roughly the size of the cow. Some breeds finish sooner than others, too.

Dressing percentage is lower. There is limited research on this (and above topics), but carcass to live weight ratios will be lower. I have heard in the range of 53-55%. Grass finished carcasses are leaner and sometimes smaller muscled. There may be more shrink with hanging if there is less fat cover on the carcass.

This is a short summary of some points to ponder. For more information, I have an excellent resource from University of Kentucky I can share, Producer’s Guide to Pasture-Based Beef Finishing, or you can do an internet search for it. Also, there is an excellent video that was filmed by Cornell Small Farms program showing market-readiness of beef cattle; it’s available on their You Tube channel at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrF5aCExAI-0&t=1s. It is a helpful video for both grass or grain finishing.

And as always, let me know if you have any questions.
Annual Farm Business Summary and Analysis Season is Right Around the Corner
by John J. Hanchar and Joan Sinclair Petzen

Summary
• Sound financial planning and control are keys to successfully managing a farm business.
• The next few months present good opportunities to evaluate your business’ financial management practices.
• The NWNY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Program has the capacity to work with a variety of producers as they seek to improve their business’ financial management practices.

Background
Winter months present farm business owners with opportunities to undertake planning efforts for the purpose of improving results. Research suggests that financial management practices, including annual farm business summary and analysis, key components of planning, better position a business for success.

Characteristics of Effective Farm Financial Management
Effective farm financial management emphasizes sound financial planning and control.

Financial planning is using financial information to answer the following questions.

1. Where is the business now?
2. Where do you want it to be?
3. How will you get the business to where you want it to be?

Financial planning practices include
• generating financial statements (balance sheet, cash flow statement, and income statement)
• using results to identify strengths and weaknesses
• developing projections, including those associated with proposed changes to the farm business

Financial control involves measuring financial condition and performance over time to determine whether or not the business is achieving desired results. If not, then ask, “Why not?” to identify and implement needed changes.

As the end of the year draws near, the next few months present good opportunities to examine your business’ financial management practices. As a farm business owner, you have financial objectives and goals. These direct your efforts. Do you measure the financial condition of your farm business using the balance sheet? Do you measure financial performance using the cash flow statement and income statement? If you don’t measure financial management factors, then achieving desired financial results is less likely.

The statement “If you can’t, or don’t measure it, then you can’t manage it” with its emphasis on measuring outcomes underlies the value and need for sound financial management.

Cornell University’s Dairy Farm Business Summary (DFBS) Program
• The objective of the DFBS Program is to allow producers to analyze their production and financial situation, set future goals, and make sound financial decisions.
• The DFBS also allows producers to compare their business performance to that of other dairy producers.
• The summary and analysis for each farm includes profitability analysis, balance sheet analysis, analyses of annual cash flows and repayment ability, capital and labor efficiency as well as analyses of the cropping and dairy aspects the business.

The DFBS program is a preferred financial management tool for summary and analysis for dairy farm businesses of all kinds.

Financial Statements for Agriculture (FISA) Program
• FISA is a computer based spreadsheet program that can be used by all types of farm businesses to achieve an objective similar to the one above for the DFBS Program.

(Continued on page 7)
In practice, FISA’s ability to provide peer to peer comparisons is limited. The summary and analysis for each farm includes profitability analysis, balance sheet analysis, analyses of annual cash flows and repayment ability, as well as some capital efficiency measures and analysis. The program does not summarize and analyze production aspects of the business.

Farm Business Summary and Analysis with the NWNY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Program

If you are interested in improving your farm business’ ability to practice sound financial management, then please contact us to learn more about some of the tools available and their value and/or to discuss plans for completing a farm business summary and analysis for 2019. Owners of all types of farm businesses are encouraged to contact us. The NWNY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Program has the capacity, using the above tools, to develop valuable farm business summary and analysis. The NWNY team has the capacity and desire to work with a variety of farm businesses -- dairy (small, medium, and large; conventional; organic; grazing; and others), field crop, livestock, and others.

(Continued from page 6)
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Transitioning Our Thinking on Immunity and Health
by Margaret Quaassdorff

It’s time to transition our thinking on immunity and health. During the recent 2019 Cornell Nutrition Conference, Dr. Lance Baumgard of Iowa State, presented the idea that many transition cow metabolic issues (ketosis, milk fever, and high NEFAs), and negative performance markers such as suppressed dry matter intake and low milk starts are symptoms of immune activation not the cause of, nor an actual “disease” of transition cows.

Traditionally, a number of studies have pointed to transition cow hypocalcemia (milk fever) as a precursor to ketosis, metritis, low dry matter intake, displaced abomasum, decreased milk yield, and even mastitis (Curtis et al., 1983; DeGaris and Lean, 2008; Goff, 2008; Martinez et al., 2012; Chapinel et al., 2012; Riberio et al., 2013; Neves et al., 2018a, b). The reasons for this way of thinking were from studies that suggested hypocalcemia leads to decreased skeletal muscle strength and gut motility (Goff, 2008; Oetzel, 2013; Miltenburg et al., 2016), decreased insulin secretion (Martinez et al. 2012, 2014), and the development of immunosuppression (Kimura et al., 2006). The observance of elevated NEFAs (non-esterified fatty acids) and ketosis have similarly been thought of as predictors of future low performance and continual health issues. Dr. Baumgard challenged us to think differently and consider those mentioned as symptoms of immune activation.

An indicator of immune activation is inflammation that is generally measured by lipopolysaccharides (LPS) and the proteins that carry them. LPS can be released intestinally as a result of mycotoxins in the feed or other causes of leaky gut, from the mammary tissues during mastitis infections, and in the reproductive organ tissues during incidences of metritis and uterine infections. Overstimulation of the immune system may also be increased by heat stress and psychological stressors. Many of these stressors and hindrances can occur at once in our transition cows depending on our farm management protocols. Recently, (Horst et al., 2018a, b, 2019) along with others previous, have observed a significant and unexplainable decrease in blood calcium following LPS administration in lactating cows. Infection-induced hypocalcemia has also been observed across mammalian species including humans, dogs, horses, pigs, sheep, and in calves. Additionally, hypocalcemia occurs during bouts of ruminal acidosis in dairy cows (Minuti et al., 2014), which provides support for it as an indicator of inflammation and immune response. According to Baumgard, immune activation partitions significant levels of nutrients away from normal pathways and functions. This forces the cow to metabolically rearrange her use of nutrients to an “Option 2” for maintenance and survival.

Thinking in this manner, hypocalcemia may be one of these “survival” tactics. Baumgard’s research group and others, believe that immune activation could be the origin of many transition cow metabolic and reproductive disorders, and partially explains incidences of milk fever postpartum, and severity of cases of delayed, persistent, and chronic (Caixeta et al., 2017; McArt and Neves (2019). From the proceedings of the 2019 Cornell Nutrition Conference, Figure 1 shows the potential downstream consequences of immune activation, and that poor transition cow performance, health and disorders could be a reflection of prior immune stimulation.

Could inflammation level be the new way to monitor the health of our cows? Researchers are developing and testing practical ways to help farmers identify inflamma-
tion levels in cows on-farm, though that technology is still in the future. Currently, it is best to look to improve our management practices with the goal of reducing immune stressors in our cows. Supplying adequate lying and bunker space, decreasing noise and stressful procedures during the transition period, and alleviating heat and cold stress for our dry and transition cows have been proven to increase their health and performance post calving. Making sure they receive the best quality (least mold, good fermentation, low mycotoxins) feed and water (clean, and tested for mineral imbalances if suspect) seems basic, but may go a long way in providing our cows the necessary nutrients for proper immune activation and health responses.

Additional sources provided upon request.

Transitioning Our Thinking on Immunity and Health

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Are You Asking the Right Questions?

by Timothy X. Terry, Harvest NY

Good help is hard to find and the best help is even harder to retain. Moreover, interviewing prospective candidates is often regarded as a necessary evil. Sometimes we get so disgusted with the whole ordeal of filling and refilling positions that anything with a pulse qualifies.

If you find that your turnover rate is high, or at least increasing, and/or your pool of hires is not what you originally thought, perhaps you’re not asking the right questions or the right type of questions during the interview. Remember, an interview should be more of a dialogue than an interrogation. Questions should be open-ended to foster more than just “Yes” or “No” answers. Ideally, you’re trying to determine if the candidate is a good fit for the position and the candidate is trying to determine if the position is a good fit for them. One of the major reasons people leave jobs is because of a poor fit. Often it’s because of someone – management, the candidate, or both – have tried to place a square peg in a round hole.

1. Look to uncover capabilities, not just experience. It’s common practice to ask, “Have you done X, Y, and Z?”, and this is appropriate since you’re trying to assess their baseline capabilities. However, a good open-ended follow-up question might be, “How would you approach it if X, Y, and/or Z were not working as they should?” There may be no right answer, but that’s okay. You’re just trying to see if they can notice when things are not going according to plan, if they can think on their feet, and if they are open to innovation. Experts say roughly ¾ of all jobs require no creativity, decision-making, or independent judgment. However, if you’re looking to make improvements and take your ag business or enterprise to the next level you need to hire individuals who can think with you. If it’s a middle management position you’re trying to fill, do they feel comfortable calling an “audible” to quickly deal with an unforeseen or unusual situation? By focusing on capability along with experience, you increase the chances that you will find those individuals.

2. Are they team players? This is a little trickier to assess and will require some creativity on your part to formulate the questions. Often times, the reason crews (teams) fail to accomplish the task or achieve a goal is not because they couldn’t get along (although this is a very real cause), but rather, there was a gap that wasn’t being filled. Questions and scenarios should be centered around finding gaps and developing solutions to fill them. Answers should be more “we” rather than “I” focused since that is how work really gets done. Remember, you are trying to determine if the candidate is a team player or just a know-it-all. You want to find people who will play well together and bridge the gaps when necessary. The last thing you want is a Lone Ranger who will go rogue at the first hint of trouble.

3. What do they like to work on? What do they do on their days off? Hobbies? Activities? I failed miserably at this my first year managing a university teaching and research farm staffed entirely by students. As such you’re trying to complete farm chores and research projects while also planning around student schedules. Work assignments were often focused on milking times and/or seasonal cropping activities. I usually just rotated students as they were available. Unfortunately, this philosophy resulted in me initially missing a hidden gem. I had a student from a potato farm who had no experience (and no desire to work) with livestock, but it wasn’t until I had a friendly discussion with him while we were milking one morning that I discovered his love for tinkering. Long story short, the next month I took him off the chore schedule and put him in the shop servicing the equipment, making repairs, fabricating items, etc. I let him work his own schedule through the winter. I often found him elbow-deep in a piece of equipment because he found, saw, heard, or smelled something that didn’t seem right. Sometimes he brought friends with him to help with projects because they needed a “study break”. By the following spring we had a line of equipment that was cleaned, serviced, adjusted, sharpened, etc. and

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Are You Asking the Right Questions?

(Continued from page 11)

ready to go. I also had one very happy student employee who worked for me all four years of his undergraduate program.

To prevent this oversight from happening again I developed a five minute questionnaire that I gave to every prospective student employee. It covered things like class schedules, likes, interests, hobbies, skills, etc. That way I could put students with similar interests together, who may not have a similar approach, but have a desire to reach the same goal.

I had only a few minutes to size up a work force that turned over every semester. You, however, can uncover these answers during a face-to-face interview – you just have to ask the right questions.


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Changing Pathogens, Hybrids, and Weather: Whither Corn Diseases?
Gary Bergstrom, Plant Pathologist, Cornell University

Talking Plants: The Science Behind Good Weed Management
Clarence Swanton, Weed Scientist, University of Guelph

Effective Programs for Controlling Waterhemp in Corn
Bryan Brown, NYS IPM Program, Cornell University

Soil Compaction: Measuring and Mediating Machinery Damage
Jake Kraayenbrink, Farmer/Entrepreneur, Ontario, Canada

Building a Corn Yield Potential Database in New York
Quirine Ketterings, Nutrient Management, Cornell University

Biocontrol of Corn Rootworm
Elson Shields, Entomologist, Cornell University

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Cow Comfort Program - Freestall, 9:30am - 3:00pm. Mulligan Farms, 5403 Barber Road, Avon, NY. Cost for Team Enrollee is $20 pre-register or $25 at the door. Non-enrollees $30 pre-register or $35 at the door. See page 4 for details.

Cow Comfort Program - Tiestall, 9:30am - 3:00pm. Daryl Z. Martin’s Farm, 2086 Havens Corners Road, Penn Yan, NY. See page 4 for details.

Feed Dealers’ Seminar, Tentatively 11:00am - 2:00pm. CCE Genesee County, 420 East Main Street, Batavia, NY. $30 per person, includes lunch (additional attendee $25 each). Targeted for nutritionists, veterinarians, crop and management consultants, extension educators, and dairy producers with specific interest in nutrition-oriented topics. Register online at: https://nwnyteam.cce.cornell.edu/events.php or contact Brandie Waite at: 585-343-3040 x138 or bls238@cornell.edu

Empire State Barley and Malt Summit - Liverpool, NY, Holiday Inn, 441 Electronics Pkwy, Liverpool, NY 13088. The summit will bring together leaders in the New York State malting barley supply chain. For more information and to register online visit: https://fieldcrops.cals.cornell.edu/small-grains/malting-barley/empire-state-barley-and-malt-summit/

Corn Congress - Batavia, NY, 8:30am - 3:30pm. Quality Inn & Suites, 8250 Park Road, Bataavia, NY 14020. See page 14 for details.

Corn Congress - Waterloo, NY, 8:30am - 3:30pm. Quality Inn, 2468 NYS Route 414, Waterloo, NY 13165. See page 14 for details.

Soybean/Small Grains Congress - Batavia, NY, 8:30am - 3:30pm. Quality Inn & Suites, 8250 Park Road, Bataavia, NY 14020. For more information visit: https://nwnyteam.cce.cornell.edu/events.php

Soybean/Small Grains Congress - Waterloo, NY, 8:30am - 3:30pm. 8:30am - 3:30pm. Quality Inn, 2468 NYS Route 414, Waterloo, NY 13165. For more information visit: https://nwnyteam.cce.cornell.edu/events.php