

North Country Ag Advisor

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Cornell Cooperative Extension North Country Regional Ag Team

CCE North Country Regional Ag Team

Kitty O'Neil, PhD Field Crops & Soils 315-854-1218 kao32@cornell.edu

Casey Havekes Dairy Management 315-955-2059 cdh238@cornell.edu

Kelsey O'Shea Ag Business Management 315-955-2795 kio3@cornell.edu

Michael Hunter Field Crops & Soils 315-788-8450 meh27@cornell.edu

Lindsay Ferlito Dairy Management 607-592-0290 lc636@cornell.edu

Tatum Langworthy Sr. Admin Assistant 315-788-8450 tlm92@cornell.edu

CCE Harvest NY

Lindsey Pashow Ag Business and Marketing 518-569-3073 lep67@cornell.edu

CCE County Ag Educators

Betsy Hodge (St. Lawrence) Carly Summers (Essex) 315-379-9192 518-962-4810 bmf9@cornell.edu cfs82@cornell.edu Billy Bullock (St. Lawrence) Gabby Wormuth (Jefferson) 315-379-9192 wrb93@cornell.edu

Mellissa Spence (Lewis) 315-376-5270 mms427@cornell.edu

315-788-8450 grw67@cornell.edu

Grace Ott (Clinton) 518-561-7450 qco26@cornell.edu

Robin Wendell-Zabielowicz (Lewis) 315-376-5270 rw583@cornell.edu

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"The North Country Regional Ag Team is a Cornell Cooperative Extension partnership between Cornell University and the CCE Associations in Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton, and Essex counties."

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Our Mission

"The North Country Regional Ag Team aims to improve the productivity and viability of agricultural industries, people and communities in Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton, and Essex Counties by promoting productive, safe, economically, and environmentally sustainable management practices, and by providing assistance to industry, government, and other agencies in evaluating the impact of public policies affecting the industry."

Field Crops and Soils NNY Weather Summary for April 1 through May 31, 2020 By Kitty O'Neil

The 2020 growing season started out cold and dry. Temperature-wise, we've recovered from the early cold weather so that near normal GDD₅₀ have been accumulated, but the dry weather has persisted. April and May GDD₅₀ accumulations for NNY have been about 98% of normal, despite April bringing just 12% of normal GDD₅₀. Franklin County locations are actually slightly above average GDD₅₀, while most of the other listed locations are 0 to 12% lower compared with the 15-year average. Soils continue to be dry across the North Country as rain has been well below normal across the region. The 24 NNY locations listed below received an average of about 58% of normal precipitation for April and May. Across NNY, several areas are more than 4" shy of our 15-year average precipitation for April and May. The 6-10 day forecast include less than normal rain for the Northeast and above-normal temperatures.

		Accumulation from April 1 to May 31, 2020						
		Precipitation, in			- GDD Base 50F -		GDD Base 40F	
County	Town/Village	Total	DFN	Days	Total	DFN	Total	
Clinton	Champlain	3.87	-4.10	23	261	0	584	
	Ellenburg Depot	4.21	-3.35	25	222	2	491	
	Beekmantown	3.49	-3.55	18	256	-11	570	
	Peru	3.74	-2.41	18	255	-12	562	
Essex	Whallonsburg	5.19	-2.13	16	254	-21	575	
	Ticonderoga	4.85	-2.66	16	265	-34	605	
Franklin	Bombay	3.83	-3.41	32	274	18	592	
	Malone	3.36	-3.83	25	256	20	551	
	Chateaugay	4.77	-3.05	30	243	9	525	
Jefferson	Rodman	6.74	-0.61	32	236	-30	502	
	Cape Vincent	4.08	-2.78	30	230	34	510	
	Evans Mills	4.83	-2.25	33	271	-22	572	
	Redwood	4.46	-3.95	30	255	0	574	
	Antwerp	4.04	-3.08	33	237	-10	529	
Lewis	Talcottville	6.15	-1.22	35	194	-20	444	
	Martinsburg	5.90	-0.49	31	239	-16	526	
	Carthage	5.46	-1.61	30	242	-17	525	
St. Lawrence	Gouverneur	3.33	-4.41	32	217	-12	503	
	Hammond	3.92	-3.92	29	238	10	538	
	Ogdensburg	3.82	-4.03	25	238	-2	555	
	Canton	3.54	-3.99	28	245	-15	546	
	Madrid	3.17	-4.01	26	244	-4	543	
	North Lawrence	3.29	-3.92	29	256	-11	562	
	Louisville	3.17	-4.32	21	242	0	552	
Average		4.30	-3.05	27	245	-6	543	

* Precipitation in inches, temperature in Fahrenheit, DFN = difference from 15-year average, Days = days with precipitation. Calculated from <u>ACIS NRCC 2.5-mile gridded datasets</u>. **High** and **low** values within each column are highlighted.



NNYADP Research: First-Ever Evaluation of European Meadow Fescue Varieties

By Kara Dunn, NNYADP

PRESS RELEASE: June 29, 2020

Link: <u>https://www.nnyagdev.org/index.php/2020/06/29/</u> nnyadp-research-1st-evaluation-of-european-meadow-fescue -varieties/

Northern N.Y. Alfalfa-grass quality trials in northern New York State are evaluating European meadow fescue varieties never before tested in North America and the first modern variety of meadow fescue developed in the U.S. from plants isolated in southwestern Wisconsin. These trials support New York's dairy industry by examining a forage crop grown to feed milking dairy cows.

The Northern New York Agricultural Development Program (NNYADP) is funding the research that is being conducted by the Cornell University research team of Debbie J.R. Cherney, Ph.D., and Jerry H. Cherney, Ph.D. The latest results report of trials on farms in NNY is posted under the Research: Field Crops: Grasses tab at <u>www.nnyagdev.org</u>.

The NNYADP trials are evaluating the opportunity to add European varieties of meadow fescue, a winter-tolerant perennial grass, to alfalfa plantings. The goal is to successfully grow meadow fescue as 20-30 percent of a mix with alfalfa under northern New York conditions. The spring harvest may account for up to half of the total forage yield of a crop grown to feed milking dairy cows.

"These regional trials are providing insight into alfalfa-grass combinations that can increase forage fiber digestibility enough to significantly increase milk income using balanced rations," Debbie J.R. Cherney said.

"Many of the European meadow fescue varieties we are evaluating were developed in harsher environments than those in northern New York, so they should overwinter successfully here, but we need to evaluate the opportunity for yield and quality and their competitiveness with alfalfa," Jerry Cherney explained.

The U.S.-bred meadow fescue in the NNYADP trial showed the highest neutral detergent fiber digestibility of the 19 varieties trialed in 2019. The seed supply of the variety known as Hidden Valley, for the farm from which the variety has originated, sold out almost immediately after it became available. The NNYADP trial data indicated that the Hidden



Photo: NNYADP alfalfa-grass trials on regional dairy farms, include European meadow fescue varieties never before tested in North America. Photo: Jerry H. Cherney.

Valley meadow fescue grew at the desired grass percentage in tandem with alfalfa.

Six farms in northern New York are participating in these forage research trials. In 2019, one farm harvested the trial plots twice, another farm harvested three times, and another participant harvested four times. A fourth farm successfully established a new seeding in 2019. Two additional farms joined the project in 2020, seeding trials with three new meadow fescue varieties released by a German seed company.

Harvested samples are assayed for alfalfa-grass percentage and alfalfa and grass quality in terms of crude protein, lignin, and fiber; dry matter yield; and evaluated for the influence of soil type, drainage, fertilization, seeding rate, and harvesting schedule on crop quality.

Funding for the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program is supported by the New York State Legislature and administered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. Learn more at <u>www.nnyagdev.org</u>.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

- Project leader: Debbie Cherney: 607-255-2882, djc6@cornell.edu
- NNYADP Co-Chairs: Jon Greenwood, 315-386-3231; Joe Giroux, 518-563-7523; Jon Rulfs, 518-572-1960
- NNYADP Coordinator Michele Ledoux: 315-376-5270, mel14@cornell.edu
- Publicist Kara Lynn Dunn: office 315-465-7578, karalynn@gisco.net

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NORTH COUNTRY REGIONAL AG TEAM

Dairy

Back to Basics: Herd Management Lessons from COVID-19

By Lindsay Ferlito, Betsy Hicks, and Margaret Quaassdorff, CCE Regional Dairy Specialists

In response to these especially volatile times, producers have been faced with having to make rapid changes. These changes have led to some unintended consequences, many of which would often be considered positive in a typical dairy market. When producers take a step back to ensure they are doing the basics of herd management, it provides cows the best environment to be productive and healthy. Below are some reminders of best management practices, and stories of producers who implemented these strategies and saw positive results.

Cow Comfort

Given that cows spend about 11-12 hours per day lying down, providing a properly designed and managed stall is one of the most significant factors impacting cow comfort and production. While deep-beds are usually considered the "gold standard" (reduced lameness, fewer injuries, higher lying times), other types of stalls can work really well with the right amount of bedding and management. Cows lay down longer when provided with more, dry bedding, and lameness is reduced when there is at least 2 inches of bedding covering the stall surface. Maintaining stall hygiene and comfort is key to overall cow health and performance no matter what the circumstances.

• Stocking Density

When cows are too crowded, lying time is reduced, feeding rate increases, competitive interactions increase, and milk production and reproduction can suffer. While there are multiple research studies that show these negative impacts of overcrowding at the feedbunk and the stalls when stocking density gets above 115-120% and less than 24 inches of feed space, there is no perfect stocking density – this is a number that is herd- and situation-specific. What works on your herd is unique given your facilities and management, and it will vary depending on other factors, such as outside temperature, time spent out of the pen, and feed management. Stocking density is something that should be continually evaluated, and you may be surprised that you've slowly crept up and are above an optimal level. Several producers have mentioned how they sold an extra 20, 50, or 100 cows and milk in the bulk tank actually went up.



ated per cow in each pen? Recommendations are for at least 4" of linear water space per head, but often pens have been crowded and cows on average have less than 2" of water space. One NY producer recently pulled out waterers that were not using the full length of crossovers, as he measured only about 2" per head, and put in waterers that fit the full length of the crossover, putting him closer to that 4" per head. Within a week, the whole herd average increased about 4 pounds of milk. This is in agreement with research that has shown a linear milk response with increasing water space.

• Diet Considerations

High quality forage sources in lactating cow diets are always important, but become increasingly so when we raise the forage to concentrate ratio. This has been a strategy to reduce excess milk production, increase components, and contribute to overall rumen health, without threatening future production. Working with a nutritionist to properly balance and strategically feed a higher forage diet will also give producers a chance to uncover opportunities to save on diet and health costs, and set a plan for forage production and inventory goals in the future. Many producers have also taken this opportunity to work with their nutritionist to become more knowledgeable about the return on investment of feed additives, while focusing on a more efficient and profitable ration with better cow health and components.

Continued on Page 8...

Water Space

When was the last time the linear water space was evalu-

Strategies for Feeding Milk to Calves

Feeding an increased plane of nutrition to calves has long been recommended and studied by researchers at Cornell. The benefits include higher and more efficient growth rates early on that last throughout the cow's productive life, as well as increased nutrient availability in times of cold stress (where nutrient requirements are increased for maintenance and growth), and for immunity response. The presence of excess milk production over what milk processors will pick up has given farms the chance not only to feed whole milk to calves, but the opportunity to keep calves on milk longer. Transition milk (the first four or five days post-calving) contains a high amount of growth factors that research says enhances health and long-term performance of calves. Producers have experimented with extending milk feeding up to 60-90 days of age, which has reduced waste of excess milk, and showed noticeable improvements in calf growth and condition.

First Lactation Cows

It is well recognized that heifers have different requirements than mature cows; in terms of growth, milk production and behavioral/social needs the first lactation heifer is a vastly different animal than a 3rd or 4th lactation cow. Herds that take the time to identify a strategy for making a separate plan for housing first lactation animals see results quickly, and often state they wish they had done it sooner. One producer, after figuring out how to manage lactating first calf heifers separately, saw peak milk increase almost ten pounds and whole herd milk production increased almost five pounds.

Culling Strategies

What does your optimal herd look like? We have seen farms experience disturbances in labor, and reduced milk pickup. This had led farm managers to evaluate each cow before investing in dry cow treatment, or another straw of semen/sync program. On the heifer side, determine how many replacements are needed, and whether each heifer has the potential to improve overall herd performance when she reaches the productive stage. Producers have improvements in overall herd performance when choosing to cull less productive and problem animals.

Farm Team Communication

Communication between employees and the farm management team is important during the best of days, and especially during times of struggle or challenge. Writing protocols and organizing staff meetings are probably most farmers' least favorite tasks, but they are critical to a smooth and successfully run farm business. Further, most dairies are required to have written protocols and continuing education training with their employees through programs like the FARM Program. Ensure your dairy has a detailed on-boarding process for new employees, up to date written protocols (in their language), and a plan to have staff meet regularly to not only address issues as they arise, but also to celebrate farms wins, contributing to a sense of farm culture and community.

• Recognizing All Farm Options

When thinking about making a change, only looking at one option is just that: a farm either makes a change or stays doing what they're doing. Instead, producers should sit down and evaluate the problem or issue at hand, and identify a few ways to remedy that problem. Sitting down with a CCE Farm Management Specialist to do a partial budget analysis on more than one option often gives clarity to what move is best. Today, a hard option to think through might be what it looks like not dairy farming, but in some instances that can be a valid scenario to work through. In the end, a change in operation should be the result of a decision-making process and not a knee-jerk response. CCE educators can help with the process.

New Podcast from CCE Dairy Educators and PRO-DAIRY, "Dialing into Your Best Dairy"

This podcast is a series about management practices and tips to reaching your herd's full genetic potential. It features PRO-DAIRY and CCE Dairy Specialists who over the course of 8 episodes will discuss the different life stages of the dairy cow, including episodes focusing on raising calves through the milk phase and weaning; managing weaned heifers up to freshening; making decisions about which

the milk phase and weaning; managing weaned heifers up to freshening; making decisions about which replacements to keep including talking about inventory, disease prevention, and culling decisions; feeding and nutrition management during lactation; facilities, time management, and ventilation considerations throughout lactation; and management factors around reproduction, gestation, and the dry period. This series also features interviews with Cornell's Dr. Mike Van Amburgh, Lindsey Worden (Holstein USA), the owners of Selz-Pralle Dairy in Wisconsin, and Paul Fouts, a NY dairy producer. Check out the podcast on the PRO-DAIRY website (https://prodairy.cals.cornell.edu/events/podcasts/) where you can find each episode along with additional resources and speaker contact information. You can also listen via SoundCloud on the CCE Dairy Educators channel (https://soundcloud.com/user-301921459-118136586), and check back for future podcast series. For more information, contact PRO-DAIRY's Kathy Barrett (https://soundcloud.com/user-301921459-118136586), or your CCE Regional Dairy Specialist (Lindsay Ferlito, https://soundcloud.com/user-301921459-118136586), or your CCE Regional Dairy Specialist (Lindsay Ferlito, https://soundcloud.com/user-301921459-118136586), or your CCE Regional Dairy Specialist (Lindsay Ferlito, https://soundcloud.com/user-301921459-118136586), or your CCE Regional Dairy Specialist (Lindsay Ferlito, https://soundcloud.com/user-301921459-118136586), or your CCE Regional Dairy Specialist (Lindsay Ferlito, https://so



Vitamin and Mineral Focus: Sodium

By Casey Havekes

Sodium is the primary extracellular cation that is required for many basic physiologic processes such as heart and nervous system function, as well as many metabolic processes. If you think back to your high school biology class you probably learned about the role of sodium in the sodium-potassium pump, which is required to transport nutrients like glucose, amino acids, and chloride across cell membranes. The same process happens in dairy cows, and there is a similar requirement for sodium to carry out this essential process. Sodium absorption occurs in the digestive tract and a majority of the sodium that cows consume from their diet is in an available form meaning that the body can readily use it; however, very little sodium is actually stored in the body so it is beneficial not to provide it in excess. Frequent supplementation at low levels is the best approach to maximize use of sodium in dairy cow diets. When considering sodium requirements, it is important to consider all the ways that sodium is lost (milk, urine, feces, sweat, and saliva). Sodium levels in the fresh cow diet should be in the range of 0.3-0.6%, and 0.25-0.30% of the remainder of the lactation (on a DM basis). These levels should increase to 0.5% when cows are experiencing heat stress as they will sweat more and consequently lose more sodium. If you suspect sodium deficiency in your herd, looks for clues such as decreased appetite and decreased water intake, increased frequency of cows licking other cows' urine, and a decrease in milk yield. Dry cows have a requirement for sodium that is slightly more complex than the lactating cow, given its involvement in DCAD. Sodium levels in the dry cow diet should not exceed 0.2% on a DM basis, and increasing sodium levels beyond this could influence the overall DCAD balance and result in metabolic issues after calving. Furthermore, sodium plays a role in water retention so if you notice frequent occurrences of edema in your transition cows, you could consider chatting with your nutritionist about reducing sodium levels for close-up dry cows. A majority of farms have sodium added to their mineral blend (in the form of sodium chloride), however some farms offer free choice salt blocks and that strategy works also. If salt blocks are the sole source of sodium, just be cautious that all cows are receiving the required level.





Proper Euthanasia Practices

By Casey Havakes

Despite it being a topic and action that is avoided on farms unless absolutely necessary, euthanasia is an important area for producers to have a thorough understanding of. Accidents happen and diseases occur that are sometimes out of our control, but it is the responsibility of the caretaker to ensure that those animals don't experience unnecessary pain and suffering. It's important for farmers to recognize and adhere to their responsibility of ensuring the basic needs of their animals are met. These basic needs include having access to feed and water, protection from the elements and predators, proper medical care is provided when needed, and that they are not suffering from pain and disease. In the unfortunate circumstance that an animal is suffering, it is the caretaker's responsibility to ensure that a 'good death' is provided to that animal.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) defines euthanasia as: "ending the life of an individual animal in a way that minimizes or eliminates pain and distress". As part of the National Dairy FARM Program Version 4.0, each farm is required to have a euthanasia protocol, and those involved in euthanasia practices are required to have annual continuing education on this topic. Below are key considerations for when you are developing your euthanasia protocol, but please have a more in-depth conversation with your herd veterinarian to ensure you are doing the right thing for your animals and your operation. As your herd veterinarian is responsible for reviewing your protocols as part of your herd health plan, this is a good opportunity to discuss with them!

As part of your euthanasia protocol, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- How are employees trained to identify animals that are candidates for euthanasia?
- What criteria are used to determine if an animal should be euthanized?
- What method is used to euthanize the animal?
- How are employees trained to confirm the animal is dead after euthanasia is completed?
- What happens to the carcass of the euthanized animal?
- How is it handled and disposed of?
- Is the equipment used to euthanize and move the deceased animals cleaned/sanitized afterwards?
- Do you record the reason for euthanasia? Where?

The first step to ensuring proper euthanasia practices are implemented is to ensure that you've correctly identified situations and/or animals where euthanasia is the best option. According to the American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP), these include:

- "Fracture, trauma or disease of the limbs, hips or spine resulting in immobility or inability to stand
- Disease conditions for which no effective treatment is known (i.e. Johne's disease, lymphoma)
- Diseases that involve a significant threat to human health (i.e. rabies)
- Disease conditions that produce a level of pain and distress that cannot be managed adequately by medical means
- Emaciation and/or debilitation from disease, age or injury resulting in an animal being too compromised to be transported or marketed
- Loss of production and quality of life (advanced age, severe mastitis, etc.)
- Advanced ocular neoplastic conditions ("cancer eye")
- Disease conditions for which treatment is cost-prohibitive
- Extended drug withdrawal time for clearance of tissue residue
- Poor prognosis or prolonged expected recovery" (AABP, 2019)

Once an animal is identified as a candidate for euthanasia, the farm must decide what the best method of euthanasia is for their situation. Human safety, animal safety and welfare, practicality, skill, and cost are amongst some of the factors to consider when deciding upon the method euthanasia. According to the AVMA, there are three acceptable methods of on-farm euthanasia:

- 1. IV administration of a lethal dose of barbiturate (with the help of your vet)
- 2. Gunshot (placement is very important)
- 3. Penetrating captive bolt (for mature animals) followed by an additional step (placement is very important)

All of these methods require training and should involve insight from your herd veterinarian. For more information on each of the methods listed above, please refer the <u>AABP</u> <u>document</u> referenced throughout this article or the <u>AVMA</u> <u>Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals</u>. These documents *Continued on Page 11...*



Inis counts towards the National Dairy FARM Program Animal Care Version 4.0 Continuing Education requirements. will provide further details on correct gun placement and distance, bullet choice, proper drug administration, and much more. As part of your continuing education on this subject, be sure to check these resources periodically as the technique or exact placement guidance may have been updated.

Once the method of euthanasia is decided upon and the act of euthanizing the animal is complete, the individual trained in this area must be able to confirm the animal is dead. The trained individual should safely confirm the lack of a heartbeat, and lack of respirations for 3-5 minutes. The AABP further recommends that it is good practice to monitor the animal for an additional 20 to 30 minutes to ensure that the animal is dead and not just unconscious. Additional signs to look for include lack of eye reflexes, graying of the mucous membranes, and rigor mortis.

Once the animal is confirmed dead, the farm should have a plan for where the animal's carcass will be disposed and how the carcass will be handled. If barbiturates are used, use care with carcass disposal as drug residues may be an issue. It is important to make sure that the equipment used for euthanizing animals is well cared for, and cleaned/ sanitized properly between animals. This is especially important when using intravenous methods. The AABP also recommends that a gun cleaning, captive bolt cleaning, and service log records are also kept when using these methods of euthanasia.

Lastly, the FARM Program encourages keeping accurate and complete records of euthanasia. This record should be kept in safe place that can be easily accessed. Since you already have to keep protocol records to be in compliance with FARM 4.0, we recommend keeping it in the same binder with your other protocols. This record should include the following details: the animal ID, the person performing euthanasia, the reason for euthanasia, the method of euthanasia, and the method of carcass disposal.

Euthanasia is never a fun topic to discuss, but it is extremely important that your farm has taken the necessary steps to ensure that animals are euthanized in a timely fashion using the absolute best practices. Please remember that ALL individuals responsible for carrying out euthanasia practices must be trained and participate in continuing education, and that proper care must be taken when operating firearms.



Farm Business Technology Corner

By Kelsey O'Shea

We are all learning to adjust to a new normal in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although food production farmers were deemed essential and have continued to operate, this doesn't mean you shouldn't be considering making changes to your business. This pandemic is teaching all of us new ways to communicate, operate, and engage with each other. We will be taking this time to explore new technologies that may be able to help your farm operate more smoothly and seamlessly in light of these changing times. This week we will be exploring:

A New Way to Keep Time

Could a Time Clock App be right for the farm?

Any farm with even one employee utilizes some version of a time clock. These can be as technologically savvy as retinal scanners that link up to your accounting system or as simple as a yellow breeding card scribbled on once a week. Whether you are high tech or low tech, employees recording time is a possible location for people to congregate, touch surfaces, use the same pens, and SHARE GERMS. So how can we eliminate this possible hub for germs? One way is by implementing a time clock app for cell phones or devices. This could actually help solve two dilemmas: the first of eliminating COVID risk, as well as helping ensure employees across the farm clock in and out appropriately for lunches and breaks in accordance with NYS Labor Laws. Here are three different time clock applications for consideration in your farm businesses:

The first is Clockify (www.clockify.com). This is a FREE application that allows you to track hours using a time log time in a timesheet, and categorize time (which is very helpful for records for management). You can create reports, export the information to excel to keep for your records, and complete payroll quickly each week with accurate hours. You can use this program on your desktop computer and then have employees download the application on their phone with their own login to track their time. This way your employees can clock in wherever they may be on the farm to get more accurate hours and eliminate the need to go to a communal location. This app is limited in that you still need to calculate what hours are overtime and it does not directly sync with Quickbooks or a financial software.

The second is ClockShark (www.clockshark.com). This is a feebased (charged per employee, basic is \$3/person/month)

application that allows you to track hours and attendance, includes basic GPS tracking (this is to ensure that employees are only clocking in when they are at or near the worksite or field), and allows for job or task categorization. There are additional features in this app including scheduling and managerial roles. You can create reports or export the information to excel, or you can integrate with your Quickbooks or financial service software to keep for your records and complete payroll. You can use this program on your desktop computer and then have employees download the application on their phone with their own login to track their time. This way your employees can clock in wherever they may be on the farm to get more accurate hours and eliminate the need to go to a communal location. You can also have a centralized unit that is a kiosk for clocking in using facial recognition.

The third is OntheClock (www.ontheclcok.com). This is a feebased (charged per employee, basic is \$2.50/person/month with 1-2 employees free) application that allows you to track hours and attendance, includes basic GPS tracking (this is to ensure that employees are only clocking in when they are at or near the worksite or field), and allows for sending payroll to other systems. There are additional features in this app including various roles and makes it that you must approve any employee users. You can create reports or export the information to excel, or you can integrate with your Quickbooks or financial service software to keep for your records and complete payroll. You can use this program on your desktop computer and then have employees download the application on their phone with their own login to track their time. This way your employees can clock in wherever they may be on the farm to get more accurate hours and eliminate the need to go to a communal location. You can also have a centralized unit that is a kiosk for clocking in using biometrics. This application and service can also track paid time off, scheduling, and payroll integrations.

Check back next month for more ideas about how to use technology on the farm.

Classifieds

Mixed Grass Haylage

- one bag 9ft by 200
- one partial bag 9 ft with 120ft first mixed grass haylage

Call Walter: 315-783-9910 Antwerp, NY

- Round bale haylage or annual forage
- Custom service
- No-till forage seeder
- Baling and wrapping
- Deep subsoil plowing on contours

Call Dean Yancey: 315-376-4713 Lowville, NY



NORTH COUNTRY REGIONAL AG TEAM

CCE North Country Regional Ag Team 203 North Hamilton Street Watertown, New York 13601

What's Happening in the Ag Community

Due to COVID-19 social distance restrictions, all in-person CCE programs have been postponed until further notice. Check out our CCE NCRAT Blog and YouTube channel for up to date information and content.

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