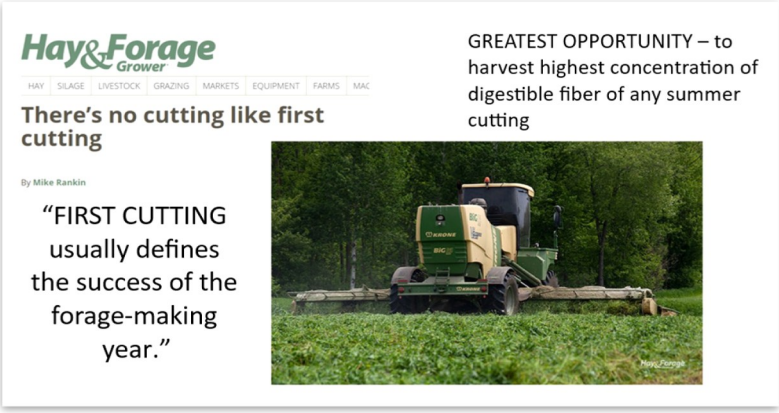
Cornell Cooperative Extension
South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Program
Broome | Cayuga | Chemung | Cortland | Tioga | Tompkins
DAIRY & FIELD CROPS DIGEST
May/June 2026

Capturing Peak Quality in First Cutting Hay Crop

By: Janice Degni and Betsy Hicks, Extension Specialists



It's that time of year when we begin monitoring the growth of alfalfa to predict harvest timing for dairy quality feed. Research has shown that alfalfa height is a reliable indicator of forage quality for both alfalfa and grass hay. By tracking alfalfa heights each week, we can calculate growth rates and predict first cutting harvest dates to help farms achieve optimal forage quality. Alfalfa heights are easy to measure, and they are more accurate than other methods used to determine harvest timing.

The soils and air temperatures have been below average. Alfalfa came through the winter pretty well unless it was on heave prone soils. There is noticeable white burning symptoms on leaf edges from the below freezing temp drop in mid-April. Growth has been slow over the past two weeks with only a ½ inch to an inch of growth.

This project combines applied research and timely education to influence management decisions that drive economic performance on dairy farms. Harvesting the first hay cutting at the right moment "defines the success of the forage making year" and provides the greatest opportunity to harvest a high concentration of quality feed. Farms that do a good job with first cutting can feed more hay crop and less grain, which leads to healthier cows, more milk, and lower feed costs.

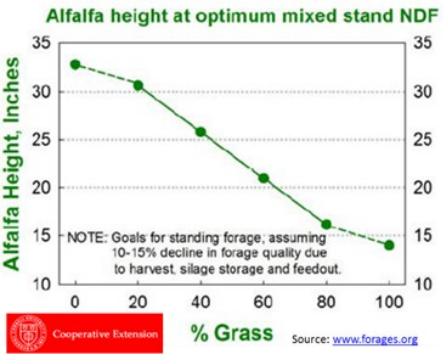
The first hay cutting is not only the most important, but also the easiest to miss the optimum timing. Weather conditions are more variable in the spring, and forage quality declines faster in the spring compared to summer and fall. Once farmers begin planting corn, it can be very difficult to park the planter and switch to cutting hay. Farms that fail to achieve forage quality goals for the first hay cutting tend to struggle with lower milk production and higher feed costs until the next crop season.

The report will also include an update on grass maturity later in May. We take scissor cut samples from the field and send them for NIR analysis. These results help assess maturity for other classes and species of livestock. If you are interested in receiving the weekly progress reports subscribe to our blog.

A Reminder on our Methods

For prediction of NDF content, the height of alfalfa as an indicator is as follows:

- 100% grass stands – cut when nearby alfalfa is 14 inches tall (achieves 50% NDF)
- 50/50 grass/alfalfa stands – cut when nearby alfalfa is 22 inches tall (achieves 44% NDF)
- 100% alfalfa stands – cut when alfalfa is 28 inches tall (achieve 40% NDF)



Predicted days to cut are based on daily NDF increases for grasses of 1.0% point, 50/50 mixed alfalfa/grass stands of 0.8% points, and alfalfa of 0.5% points and are adjusted for the coming week's weather. Typically NDF increases about 0.8 to 1.2 per day for grasses, with cooler weather being the lower end of the range and warmer weather being the higher end. For alfalfa, NDF increases about 0.4 to 0.7 per day, also dependent upon warm/cool weather.

Grass Development—Assuring the seed head is above cutting height (4")

In springs when alfalfa development seems to outpace grass development, alfalfa height measurements can indicate it is time to cut grass (see graph) before the grass seedhead has progressed up the stem to a point where it will be removed during mowing (4" above soil surface). If the seedhead is not removed with cutting it will have negative consequences on grass regrowth. The intact seedhead will emerge shortly after mowing and stunt regrowth.

When this occurs, it is better to wait for the seedhead to elongate above the cutting height even if this is slightly past the harvest timing suggested ***Continued on page 2.***

TEAM NEWS

The South-Central New York Dairy and Field Crop Advisory Management Group has announced that CCE Cayuga will be withdrawing from the SCNY DFC regional team, effective September 30, 2026. While we'll miss having them, we understand that this financial decision is in the best interests of their county. The remaining Associations (Broome, Chemung, Cortland, Tioga, and Tompkins) will work closely with the Cornell Cooperative Extension administration over the next few months to review the regional budget and work plan and determine the next steps. Stay tuned for more news!

We are pleased to provide you with this information as part of the Cooperative Extension Dairy and Field Crops Program serving Broome, Cayuga, Cortland, Chemung, Tioga and Tompkins Counties. **Anytime we may be of assistance to you, please do not hesitate to call.** Visit our website: http://scnydfc.cce.cornell.edu and find us on social media! Facebook, YouTube, & Twitter!

Janice Degni
Team Leader & Field Crops Specialist
607.391.2672 jgd3@cornell.edu

Betsy Hicks
Area Dairy Specialist
607.391.2673 bjh246@cornell.edu

Tatum Langworthy
Administrative Assistant
315.778.3929 tlm92@cornell.edu

We put knowledge to work in pursuit of economic vitality, ecological sustainability, and social well-being. We bring local experience and research-based solutions together, helping our families and our community thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Peak Quality Continued from page 1.

by the alfalfa height. Grass progress can be rapid at this time so the delay needed will not be long and it is important to track progress frequently during this time, Joe Lawrence, PRO-DAIRY Forage Specialist advises.

Example of split grass stem with seedhead approximately 5 inches above soil surface (*picture from previous growing season*). J. Lawrence

Betsy and Janice rely on extra help to cover our six counties. This year Ron Kuck is volunteering his time to monitor fields in the northern reaches of Cayuga County and Kelly Ann Jackson is checking Tioga County fields. We welcome farms to self-report a field or two. Your measurements would generate predicted harvest dates. If you are interested in that feel free to contact Janice or Betsy and we will tell you the information we need with the weekly measurements.

Reference: Rankin, M. (2020, April 28). There's no cutting like first cutting. Hay and Forage Grower Magazine. Retrieved June 29, 2022.

★

The Ultimate Grazing School

with Troy Bishopp

September 8-9, 2026
Lindley, NY

Limited registration! $50 per person, includes 2-day course with lunch both days

This hands-on grazing school equips you with practical tools—from planning and measuring forage to benchmarking profitable strategies and navigating weather challenges—to boost resilience, production, and profitability. Good grazing is the foundation of a profitable farm or ranch, as it directly impacts soil health, forage quality, and livestock performance. Effective grazing management ensures optimal utilization of resources, reduces costs, and maximizes returns by improving pasture productivity year after year. For beginners and seasoned graziers alike, this course will provide hands-on learning and the sharing of peer-to-peer knowledge to build a solid network.

By learning from grazing expert Troy Bishopp and a lineup of outstanding speakers, you're investing in strategies that deliver real results. Their combined knowledge and real-world examples will help you implement proven techniques in your operation, making this course not just an educational opportunity, but a wise investment in the long-term success and profitability of your farm or ranch.

https://www.grazinglands.org/events/ultimate-grazing-schoo-troy-bishopp for more information and registration.

Save the Dates
Upcoming Programs

Optimizing Management of Manure Solids Bedding - An On-Farm Tour
Wednesday, June 17, 2026
1:00pm-3:00pm
Belltown Dairy (181 Mahaney Rd, King Ferry, NY 13081)

Showcasing practical knowledge from a recent NYFVI funded project "**Evaluating the Sustainable Use of Manure Solids as Dairy Cattle Bedding"**, the on-farm tour will include an overview of the solids separation process at Belltown, and a walk through of the facilities using the solids as bedding for lactating dairy cattle. Research findings from the project will be shared, and discussion on best management practices encouraged. The project is a collaboration between PRO-DAIRY, CCE SCNY Dairy & Field Crops Team, and participating farms throughout NYS.

Free registration appreciated! Light refreshments provided
https://apps.ideal-logic.com/cornellcoop?key=NYCG-GFKZS_K9KH-5PTF_6fabbe9cc3c9

Beef x Dairy Finishing - An On-Farm Tour
Thursday, July 16, 2026
6-8pm
Minturn Farm (5627 Sevior Road Auburn, NY 13021)

This on-farm event will share 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/Farm, The farm owner will share numbers related to average daily gains, health, rumination data and more on BxD cattle versus beef type breeds. The farm will also showcase their feedlot, handling facilities and weighing system during the tour. This project is a collaboration between Centerstate Cattle Co, CCE SCNY Dairy & Field Crops Team, and CCE NWNY Dairy, Livestock & Field Crops team.

Free, registration appreciated! Light refreshments provided, sponsored by smaXtec (this is how that business should be written, little s, big X)
https://apps.ideal-logic.com/cornellcoop?key=NYCG-GFKZS_K9KH-5PTF_8e74d306871e

Silvopasture Pasture Walk
Friday, July 17, 2026
10:30am-12:30pm
Twin Oaks Dairy, 3185 NY-13, Truxton, NY

Twin Oaks will showcase their 2021 silvopasture planting which includes some black locusts that are 20+ feet tall. Plans for further plantings will be discussed, as well as other aspects of their rotational grazing system. For those who need assistance with the walk to the Silvopasture, UTV's will be available to shuttle people as needed.
This on-farm event is a collaboration between Twin Oaks Dairy, American Farmland Trust, CCE SCNY Dairy & Field Crops Team, CCE Tompkins County, National Grazing Lands Coalition, Cortland County SWCD, NOFA-NY, and Dairy Grazing Alliance.

Date—TBD this summer
Cortland County Pasture Walk – featuring Virtual Fence and Bale Grazing
For more information, or to be notified when date/location have been set, contact Betsy Hicks, bjh246@cornell.edu 607.391.2673

How Bad Is $6 Diesel for the Farmer?

By: Andrew Frankenfield and Dwane Miller, Extension Educators, Agronomy, Penn State Extension

Here we go again. The fuel price, in addition to all other escalated costs, will impact the bottom line for your farm. Take time to understand and evaluate all your costs with each crop you grow.

The Impact of Rising Fuel Prices on Agricultural Production: A Closer Look at Cost Implications

In recent months, rising fuel prices have become a major concern for farmers across the nation. The surge in diesel prices, in particular, is significantly impacting the bottom line of agricultural producers. For many, the increase in fuel costs is yet another challenge in an already difficult financial environment, as input costs for items such as fertilizer and labor have risen. Understanding and evaluating these rising costs at a granular level is essential for farmers to ensure profitability and make informed decisions for the upcoming growing season.

Fuel Consumption in Agricultural Operations

One of the most pressing questions for farmers in light of rising fuel prices is: How much fuel does an average farm consume annually? The answer can vary depending on the farming practices in use, such as tillage methods, fertilizer application, and the scale of operations. However, studies show that a typical cash grain farm employing no-till methods and conventional fertilizers may use less than 3 gallons of diesel per acre for growing and harvesting crops such as corn and soybeans. This figure can increase for farms that use tillage practices and spread manure, which require more fuel-intensive operations.

In addition to fuel used directly for planting and harvesting, farmers must also account for the energy used in producing inputs such as nitrogen fertilizers and in processing crops during harvest. For example, drying corn to remove moisture is an energy-intensive process that requires both gas and electricity.

Keeping clear records of fuel purchases and usage can help you anticipate any expected rises in production costs. A handy reference for expected fuel usage is this recently updated fact sheet from Iowa State University. Generally, as implement width increases, ground speed increases, and soil type or tillage depth changes, the increased draft requirements will consume more fuel per acre. Diesel fuel requirements can be estimated fairly reliably by multiplying the PTO horsepower of a diesel engine by 0.044 to calculate fuel usage in gallons per hour.

Energy Requirements for Corn and Soybean Production

Figure 1 (from Iowa State University) provides a clear illustration of the relative energy requirements for producing corn and soybeans. The data suggests that producing corn typically demands higher fuel inputs due to factors such as nitrogen fertilizer application and moisture removal during drying. However, soybean production, while less energy-intensive in terms of fertilizer and drying needs, still requires substantial energy for operations like tillage and planting.

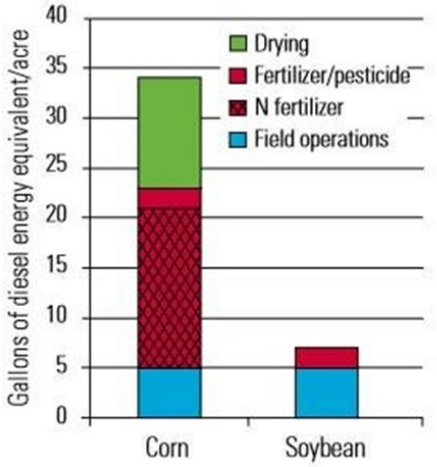


Figure 1. Relative energy requirements (gallons of equivalent diesel fuel energy) per acre for corn and soybean production. (Assumptions: 125 pounds of commercial N fertilizer applied per acre on corn; 5 percentage points of moisture removed from 175 bushel corn; full-width tillage operations for both crops.) Photo Credit: Iowa State University fact sheet: "Farm Energy: Energy consumption for row crop production".

Rising Fuel Prices and Their Direct Impact on Production Costs

To quantify the financial implications of rising diesel prices, let's consider a simple example. If diesel costs $3 per gallon, and a farm requires 3 gallons per acre for planting and harvesting, the fuel cost amounts to $9 per acre. At a price of $6 per gallon, this cost doubles to $18 per acre—an increase of $9 per acre. For a farm that manages 500 acres of corn and soybeans using no-till practices, this price hike results in an additional $4,500 in fuel costs.

Broader Economic Impact on Hay Production and Transportation

Farmers who grow hay will also feel the effects of rising fuel costs. It takes approximately 3 gallons of diesel fuel to cut, ted, rake, bale and transport hay to storage per acre. At a fuel price of $3 per gallon, the cost per acre per cutting is about $9.00. At $6 per gallon, this cost doubles to $18.00 per acre per cutting. For a farm producing 4 tons of hay per acre in 3 cuttings, the increase in fuel costs amounts to approximately an additional $6.75 per ton.

Transportation costs are another significant area of concern. As diesel prices rise, so do the costs associated with hauling crops and inputs. Every $1.00 increase if fuel price generally adds roughly $0.16-$0.20 per mile in operational cost. This updated crop enterprise budgets for 2026.

Areas to Conserve Fuel when Operating Equipment

There are several ways to increase fuel efficiency when using machinery. One would be to match the tractor size to the task at hand. Oversized tractors burn unnecessary fuel when operated with a partial load. In general, performing light-load tasks with an oversized tractor running at rated engine speed can waste 15% to 30% more fuel than if the engine speed were

Cropping Notes

By: Janice Degni, Regional Extension Field Crop Specialist

In the prior newsletter, I discussed stewardship as practices that help extend the lifespan of our crop protection tools—whether in-bred traits or pesticides. Central to this stewardship is the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which provides a sound foundation for protecting both our products and the environment.

IPM is not a single tactic, but a decision-making framework that uses multiple strategies to manage insects, weeds, and diseases efficiently and responsibly. As spring field operations ramp up, IPM remains the smartest approach for Northeast field crop producers striving to balance productivity, profitability, and sustainability.

IPM Reduces Costs by Preventing Unnecessary Treatments

A key strength of IPM is its use of economic action thresholds. Instead of reacting at the first sign of a pest, IPM encourages treatment only when populations are likely to cause economic harm. This prevents routine or reactionary pesticide applications and ensures that inputs are applied only when the return justifies the cost. By treating only when necessary, growers save money while maintaining yield and crop value.

IPM Emphasizes Prevention

IPM begins with prevention—recognizing that a healthy crop is the first line of defense. Practices such as crop rotation, planting resistant varieties, proper planting dates, clean seedbeds, and good field sanitation reduce pest pressure before problems develop. Many of these steps add little cost but significantly reduce reliance on reactive chemical controls, strengthening overall system resilience.

IPM Protects Beneficial Insects and Soil Life

Not all insects are pests. In fact, fewer than 1% of insect species are harmful, while many contribute to pest suppression, pollination, and nutrient cycling. IPM stresses accurate pest ID and conservation of beneficial insects such as predators, parasitoids, and microbial organisms. Avoiding unnecessary sprays helps preserve these natural allies—like lady beetles feeding on soybean aphids.

IPM Uses the Least-Disruptive Tools First

IPM follows a tiered approach to pest control. After monitoring and identification, growers are guided toward the least risky but effective tactics, including cultural practices (rotation or planting adjustments), biological controls, mechanical methods, and targeted pesticide use only when required. This structured strategy protects applicators, the environment, and long-term crop health while keeping pests under control.

IPM Supports Long-Term Productivity

Because IPM relies on ecological principles rather than reliance on chemical intervention, it slows pesticide resistance development, maintains soil health and biodiversity, supports pollinators, and stabilizes yields under variable weather conditions. These benefits make IPM especially important as pest pressure and climate variability continue to evolve.

Why IPM Works

IPM saves money, improves control effectiveness, protects beneficial organisms, preserves pesticide efficacy, and builds resilient cropping systems. Simply put, IPM keeps crops healthy using the smartest, safest, and most cost-effective combination of tools available—not one tool applied too often.

References

SARE – The Northeast Crop Production Manual (sare.org)
Agronomic Crops Network – agcrops.osu.edu
TCW Mid-March 2026 – issuu.com
Northeast Cover Crops Council – northeastcovercrops.com ★

How Bad Is $6 Diesel ***Continued from page 4***

reduced to match the actual power requirement. You should also strive to optimize engine speed and ground speed. Fuel consumption rises quickly at high RPM's. Shifting to a higher gear and throttling back the tractor (where torque reserve allows), avoiding running PTO equipment faster than required, and using PTO economy settings (540E and 1000E) can result in fuel savings. Finally, maintaining equipment for fuel efficiency can also lead to savings. Ensure air and fuel filters are kept clean. A case study from the University of Missouri found that simply replacing clogged air and fuel filters lowered a tractor's fuel consumption by 4%. Proper tire inflation pressures can also maximize fuel efficiency. Michigan State University conducted a study and found that, in tilled, moist soil conditions, using the correct low tire pressure (as opposed to overinflated tires) reduced diesel fuel consumption by 20% while increasing productivity by 5.7% during stubble-disking operations.

Looking Ahead: Managing Rising Fuel Costs in Agriculture

The rise in fuel prices will undoubtedly continue to influence the agricultural sector, driving up the cost of inputs and transportation. As a result, farmers must take proactive steps to manage these increasing expenses. This may include reevaluating crop choices, reducing field passes or optimizing precision agriculture technologies to limit fuel consumption. Understanding the full scope of fuel consumption and its impact on the overall cost structure is critical for farmers to make data-driven decisions that will ensure the long-term sustainability of their operations.

Conclusion

Rising fuel prices are not just an inconvenience for farmers—they are a significant factor in production costs. Increases in diesel fuel costs directly affect the cost of planting, harvesting, and transporting crops. For many farms, this means higher operational expenses and tighter profit margins. By carefully evaluating their energy needs and factoring fuel price increases into their budgets, farmers can better prepare for the challenges ahead. Strategic adjustments in farming practices and crop choices, combined with proactive cost management, will be key to navigating these economic pressures in the years to come.

Source: Penn State Extension Field Crop News. April 2, 2026. ★

Value of Manure Calculator Cell Phone App Available Now

By: Juan Carlos Ramos Tanchez, Kirsten Workman, Carlos Irias, and Quirine M. Ketterings
Cornell University Nutrient Management Spear Program, PRO-DAIRY

Introduction

Quantification of nutrients in manure is essential to ensure efficient resource management, maximize agricultural productivity, and minimize negative environmental impact. A Value of Manure Calculator cell phone app was developed to estimate the agronomic and economic fertilizer replacement value of manure. To use the app, users will need to enter (1) the percent solids, N, P, and K nutrient content from a recent manure analysis, (2) the implemented or planned manure application rate, (3) crop nutrient needs, and (4) fertilizer costs. The app will then return past and current N credits, P and K credits, the fertilizer replacement value of the manure. Once the land application cost per gallon of manure is added, the tool also calculates the land application cost per extra mile hauled and the break-even hauling distance and costs. The app uses manure N credits that are in line with Cornell's Nitrogen Guidelines for Field Crops in New York (2023). If you are in another state, consult your local land grant university guidance for manure N credits.

Calculator Access

The Value of Manure app can be accessed at Value of Manure Calculator (https://valueofmanure-nmsp.glide.page/) with any browser or by scanning the QR code to the right. Once opened, the user will see the opening page of the calculator (Figure 1 left). The front page shows, at the bottom of the screen, seven tabs: Lab Analyses; Past Application; Current Application; Crop Needs; Fertilizer Value; Hauling; and Results (Figure 1 right).

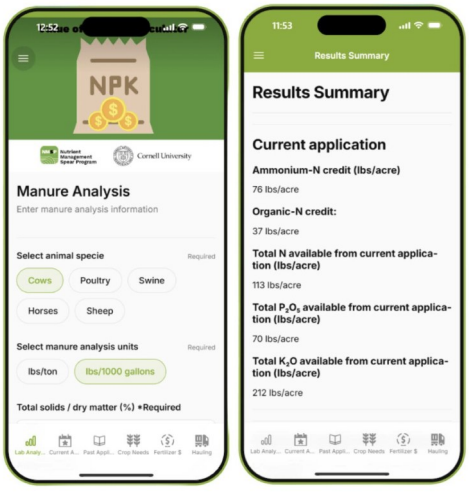


Figure 1. Value of Manure App main page showing the manure analyses tab (left) and the results page (right).

Calculator User's Guide

Recently a User's Guide explaining what the app does and how to use it, was released (Figure 2). The guide walks the user through the different taps and explains in detail the following topics:

1. Entering a Manure Analysis
2. Calculating Nitrogen Credits from Past Applications
3. Calculating Current Year Manure Nutrient Credits
4. Entering Crop Needs
5. Entering Fertilizer Value
6. Calculating Break-Even Hauling Distances and Costs
7. Understanding the Results
8. Signing in to Save Results


Value of Manure Calculator – User's Guide. 2026

Value of Manure Calculator User's Guide

Carlos I. Irias Barahona[1], Juan Carlos Ramos Tanchez[1], Kirsten Workman[1,2], and Quirine M. Ketterings[1]

[1]Nutrient Management Spear Program and [2] PRO-DAIRY Department of Animal Science, Cornell University

Revised January 31, 2026

Correct Citation: Irias Barahona, C.I., J.C. Ramos Tanchez, K. Workman, and Q.M. Ketterings (2025). Value of Manure Calculator; User's Guide. Cornell University, Ithaca NY. Accessible at: http://nmsp.cals.cornell.edu/publications/extension/ValueManure2025.pdf.

Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853

Figure 2. The Value of Manure Calculator User's Guide.

The Value of Manure Calculator User's Guide can be accessed at the NMSP website by clicking on the following link: http://nmsp.cals.cornell.edu/publications/extension/ValueManure2026.pdf.

Additional resources

- Value of Manure Calculator User's Guide: http://nmsp.cals.cornell.edu/publications/extension/ValueManure2026.pdf.
- The NMSP Value of Manure Project website: http://nmsp.cals.cornell.edu/NYOnFarmResearchPartnership/Value_of_Manure.html.
- Instructional video on how to access and install the Manure Value Calculator on a cellphone: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRtdWrdFeok

Acknowledgments

The original manure crediting system was developed based on many years of field research under the leadership of S.D. Klausner, with contributions by D.J. Lathwell, D.R. Bouldin, and W.S. Reid of Cornell University, Department of Crop and Soil Sciences. This app was developed with financial support from the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program, the New York Agricultural Viability Institute, and USDA-NIFA. For questions about this project, contact Quirine M. Ketterings at 607-255-3061 or qmk2@cornell.edu, and/or visit the Cornell Nutrient Management Spear Program website at: http://nmsp.cals.cornell.edu/.

IT'S TIME TO "SHOE" UP FOR YOUR COWS IN THE NEW YEAR

By: Katie Callero, Dairy Management Specialist, SWNYDLFC

Are you wearing shoes? Unless you are cozied up into bed right now, the answer is most likely yes. Typically, putting on shoes every morning is something we do without much thought. That is, until the day we decide to try out a new pair of shoes and get a dreaded blister. Suddenly, our thoughts are consumed by the pain in our feet. Most of the time, we no longer want to walk in those shoes and hurry to take them off to feel that sweet relief from pain.

Yet our four-legged friend, the cow, does not quite get that same luxury. This discomfort often manifests itself as lameness. Since cows cannot tell us when they are in pain, it is up to the farm teams to recognize the signs early and take action to protect mobility, comfort, and productivity.

In a Cornell Cow Convos podcast interview with Dr. Gerard Cramer about managing lameness on dairy farms, it was discussed that the average lameness prevalence is around 25% of cows, a number that has changed little over the past couple of decades despite increased research on the topic. Dr. Cramer emphasized that there are opportunities for farmers to focus more on moderately lame cows, rather than only on severely lame cows, which typically make up less than 5% of the herd. He mentioned that in his research, farms that are successful at managing lameness consistently do three important things: 1) run an effective foot bath program to control infectious hoof diseases, 2) work with a skilled hoof trimmer who is on-farm on a regular basis, and 3) have a designated individual on the farm who is passionate about hoof care and is responsible for objectively and consistently locomotion scoring cows daily to identify lameness early.

Farms often fall short in daily monitoring of locomotion scores, yet it can be incredibly valuable in mitigating lameness on farm. The University of Wisconsin Madison's Dairyland Initiative provides a clear, evidence based framework for understanding the why, who, and where of locomotion scoring. The following summary is adapted directly from their website.

Why score locomotion?

- To identify individual cows that are lame so they can be treated promptly
- To determine the herd-level lameness prevalence for troubleshooting and long-term tracking

Who should be scored?

- Identifying individual lame cows
- Routinely observe each pen of cows at least once a week to identify new cases of lameness requiring treatment
- Score cows at dry-off to identify individual cows that need attention before entering the dry period
- Assessing herd-level lameness prevalence
- In small herds (fewer than 100 cows) all cows should be scored
- In larger herds, most welfare audits use a sampling strategy focused on multiparous, high producing cows (at least two-thirds of the at-risk population), as well as lame or sick cows if they are housed separately Where should locomotion scoring occur?

REGULAR FOOTBATH REGIMENS ARE ESSENTIAL TO MITIGATING INFECTIOUS HOOF DISEASES.

- Ideally, cows should be observed walking toward, past, and away from the scorer in a location where the rear legs and back of the cow are clearly visible.
- For accurate scoring, cows should walk individually on an even, non-slip, well-lit surface.
- Avoid areas with excessive slope, slatted flooring, or highly abrasive concrete, as these surfaces can influence gait.
- When scoring groups, the observer must be able to control cow flow past the observation point; group scoring is best done as cows exit the parlor along a transfer lane.
- After milking is also an ideal time to observe locomotion, as gait abnormalities associated with claw horn lesions, such as sole ulcer, are most apparent (Flower et al., JDS 89:2084, 2006).

The Dairyland Initiative summary provides clear guidance on why, who, and where to score locomotion; however, it is important to recognize that many different locomotion scoring systems exist, each with their own structure and level of detail. The most common scoring structure being a 3–5-point systems. My personal preferred rubric is attached and is from Dairy NZ. I think they do a great job at breaking it down to the 5 different points you want to observe: walking speed, stride, weight bearing, backline, and head. All that matters is that everyone on your farm is consistently using the same scoring guidelines. I recommend printing out your chosen lameness rubric and having it easily accessible.

If you are looking for resources about lameness to share with Spanish speaking workers, my colleagues on the Northwest New York Dairy Livestock and Field Crops Team made a great video series explaining lameness in Spanish that can be found at this link: https:// tinyurl.com/ hoofcare spanish Lameness remains as a persistent challenge on dairy farms, impacting cow comfort, productivity, and longevity. Strong footbath protocols, regular hoof trimming, and dedicated on-farm observation are valuable tools for taking a more proactive approach and shifting the focus from treating severe cases to preventing lameness before it becomes an added burden. Ultimately, our goal is to ensure cows are able to put their best hoof forward as we begin the new year.

ROUTINE LOCOMOTION SCORING CAN HELP SPOT LAMENESS CASES BEFORE THEY BECOME SEVERE.

Click the link below to see the Lameness Scoring chart.
https://nydairyadmin.cce.cornell.edu/pdf/swny_newsletter/pdf436_pdf.pdf

Cornell Cooperative Extension
South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Program
60 Central Avenue • Cortland • 13045 • 607.391.2660 • http://scnydfc.cce.cornell.edu

NON PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 1
CORTLAND, NY 13045

Change Service Requested

Inside this Issue:

Upcoming Events Calendar

June 17, 2026	***Optimizing Management of Manure Solids Bedding - An On-Farm Tour,*** 1:00pm-3:00pm Belltown Dairy (181 Mahaney Rd, King Ferry, NY 13081)
July 16, 2026	***Beef x Dairy Finishing - An On-Farm Tour*** 6-8pm Minturn Farm (5627 Sevior Road Auburn, NY 13021)
July 17, 2026	***Silvopasture Pasture Walk*** 10:30am-12:30pm Twin Oaks Dairy, 3185 NY-13, Truxton, NY
September 8-9, 2026	***The Ultimate Grazing School with Troy Bishopp*** Lindley, NY

Check Out Our Online Platforms

Visit us for all the up to the minute industry news!

YouTube

Search for

South Central Dairy & Field Crops

twitter https://twitter.com/SCNYDFC

www.facebook.com/SCNYDairyandFieldCrop-sTeam

Use the QR Code to see all our event listings!