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Cornell Cooperative Extension

Southwest NY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Program

swnydlfc.cce.cornell.edu



**CROPS
COWS &
CRITTERS**
newsletter

A partnership between Cornell University and the CCE Associations of Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie and Steuben Counties.

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Photo by Katelyn Walley

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Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chautauqua County
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Erie, Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Allegany, and Steuben and their
CCE Associations. To simplify information, brand names of
products may be used in this publication. No endorsement is
intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not named.
Every effort has been made to provide correct, complete and up-
to-date pesticide recommendations. Changes occur constantly
and human errors are still possible. These recommendations are
not a substitute for pesticide labeling. Please read the label
before applying pesticides.

By law and purpose, Cooperative Extension is dedicated to
serving the people on a non-discriminatory basis. Newsletter
layout and design by Katelyn Walley-Stoll.

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For accommodations or accessibility concerns, please contact our specialists at least one week prior to the scheduled event. If you need information provided in a different format, call 716-640-0522.

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Southwest NY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Program

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SETTING YOUR FARM FINANCIAL RESOLUTIONS

The start of a new year is the perfect time for farm businesses of all shapes and sizes to reset their financial management. Join this INTERACTIVE workshop to start your farm off on the right path towards financial success in 2025. Topics include Record Keeping, Tax Management, Financial Goals, and Strategies for Profitability. Participants will receive handouts that can be used throughout the year and a quarterly farm financial checklist.



Workshops are Saturdays from 9am – 11am at the following dates and locations. Each workshop is the same, so choose the one that works best for you!



1/25 – Erie County

CCE Erie, Roycroft Campus,
21 South Grove Street, East Aurora, NY

2/15 – Steuben County

CCE Steuben, County Annex Building,
20 East Morris Street, Bath, NY



2/1 – Allegany County

CCE Allegany,
5435 County Road 48, Belmont, NY

2/22 – Chautauqua County

CCE Chautauqua, Jamestown Community College,
525 Falconer Street, Jamestown, NY



2/8 – Cattaraugus County

CCE Cattaraugus, Ellicottville Town Center,
28 Parkside Drive, Ellicottville, NY

*Fri, 2/28 – Virtual Webinar

6pm - 8pm. Participants will not receive printed handouts, a sign on link will be emailed.

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED BUT PARTICIPATION IS FREE.

EVERY FARM WILL RECEIVE USEFUL HANDOUTS AND WILL BE NOTIFIED IF THE EVENT IS RESCHEDULED DUE TO WEATHER.

To Register: visit www.tinyurl.com/syffr25 or call Kelly at 585-268-7644 ext 10 by 12noon on the prior Thursday.

Cornell Cooperative Extension is a
SWNYDLFC is a partnership between Cornell Un

native action educator and employer.
nell Cooperative Extension Associations of Allegany,

These are NEW dates, all hosted at our local CCE offices, so be sure to see what will fit into your schedule and plan to attend!

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This workshop series is geared towards beginners and those that need to brush up on their farm financial management (don't we all?!?!?!).

Managing Risk: Using Heat Lamps On The Farm

by Michael Gloss, guest writer for the Cornell Small Farms Program

It is an accepted premise that farming is a daily lesson in managing risk. Some farmers are more risk averse than others but we all find our comfort level and work from there. For example: I am not comfortable borrowing \$100,000, while I know other farmers of my same scale who are. The risk of a fire on the farm is another area which is managed differently by each farmer. No farmer wants to have a fire, but we all practice fire prevention in different ways.

This spring I opened up my email inbox to find some very unsettling news. The night before there had been a fire at the Maine farm where I had first interned 20 years ago. The barn where I had learned to milk, harness horses, and generally catch the farming bug was a smoldering pile. And worse of all, it took the lives of all the animals in it, including one of the horses I had worked with. My heart went out to the Thayer's who could only watch in tears as a centerpiece of their farm went up in flames. Luckily no humans were injured or killed.

Through conversations with other farmers and firefighters, I know the truth about rural fires and the role of the fire department. If you live rurally and have a fire you should not depend on the fire department to come save your house or barn. We have seen too many fires destroy houses of friends and neighbors. Even the house of our local volunteer fire department chief burned while, ironically, he was at the fire station.

We have a fantastic network of volunteer firefighters who will come, but only in time to contain a fire, potentially try to rescue the occupants, and keep it from spreading to other structures. The fact is, it will likely be at least 30 minutes after I make that call that a fire engine will show up at my farm. Even with three volunteer stations within 5 miles of my house, the firefighters have to first get to the station after receiving the call and then come to my place. All the water has to be trucked in or pumps have to be set up to transport the water from our pond or the creek across the street. During this time the fire will be burning and spreading.

With those assumptions we know the most important thing to do is to prevent the potential of a fire on the farm and, secondly, to have a plan of what to do if we have one. Prevention primarily involves removing as many risks as possible and reasonable. I can only scratch the surface on preventative measures, but we know that buildings with power in them have an increased risk of fire. Our equipment shed is unlikely to burn because it has no source to cause a

fire, but our main barns and house, all with power, are at a higher risk. Add a propane heater, all wood construction, 1000 bales of hay, feed, many electrical outlets, and freezers with motors and you have many potential sources of fire.

For the sake of this article I will primarily look at one potential source of fire on our farm: heat lamps. They were the cause of the fire in Maine, a number of other fires I have heard about, and two fires on our own farm. Heat lamps, generally defined, are portable hanging fixtures with bulbs in them (usually 150-250vw). They can be purchased at almost any farm or general hardware store and are usually cheap, under \$10.00.

A number of characteristics that are not always fully appreciated make heat lamps a high risk. Most are poorly made, with short thin cords, poor connections to the fixture, unreliable attachment points for hanging, and just general cheap construction. In addition, farmers generally don't have a good place to install them because many of us plan to use them "temporarily" and don't have a permanent set up. Perhaps it has gotten cold so a lamp is quickly hung up in the corner of a stall to warm a newborn lamb or 100 chicks that have just arrived. This heat lamp hangs in the corner, attached with baling twine - an accident waiting to happen.

As I mentioned earlier, we have had two fires on our farm since we began in 1996. One was in a greenhouse brooder not attached to, but very close to, the barn. We discovered the fire after it was basically out. Apparently, a brooder lamp had fallen into the bedding. Luckily, aside from the shavings (on wet ground), there was very little to burn. PVC hoops and plastic are not very flammable. But most of the chicks were sadly killed. We felt very lucky that the fire had not spread to our main barn—just feet away.

We moved our brooder facility away from the barn and soon after started using "Ohio Brooders" that use heat bulbs but not the hanging fixtures. Not only are they safer, but they can use less power because smaller wattage bulbs are required and are a much better way to warm the chickens.

The second fire happened a year ago last spring. We thought we had learned from our previous mistakes. We were using thicker bulbs, and better fixtures. But one of these must have had a frayed wire internally that shorted out without tripping the breaker. The wires melted and the bulb dropped into the very dry straw in one of our piglet brooder boxes. I believe it is pure luck that I looked out at the sow barn on the way in for lunch. It appeared that the loose snow was blowing off the roof, but as I stepped into the house I had second thoughts. Something didn't look right. I quickly realized I was seeing smoke, not snow, coming out of the eaves. I called

Heat lamps present a fire hazard, but taking safety precautions can make them less dangerous.

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Alternative heat sources like heat plates can be less risky.

back to the house, grabbed the fire extinguisher, and put out the fire. A few buckets of water finished it off. I fully believe that if I had eaten lunch, our sow barn would have burned.

To help prevent on-farm fires from heat lamps, I share the following recommendations from our experiences:

The best thing is not to use them. An exposed hanging hot bulb that is drying the bedding (tinder) below is always going to be a fire risk. Put in systems for your livestock that do not need the supplemental heat. This may include major paradigm shifts like having lambs later in the spring, or using mother hens to raise chicks instead of buying them. We, like most farmers, are not able (or willing) to completely eliminate a need for heat lamps so we must do everything we can to minimize the risk. At a minimum, turn them off as soon as you don't need them.

Don't use cheap poorly made heat lamps. Throw out all of those hardware store heat lamps. We have tried a half dozen types of heat lamps and have currently settled on one from Premier that costs about \$40.00. It is completely enclosed and is said to be able to fall and not cause a fire. It has a thick long cord and the electrical connections are sealed.

Use hard glass bulbs—not the thin glass ones. We have switched over to using hard 175w bulbs from Farmerboy Ag. Supply. They are much less likely to shatter and we have developed different types of brooder boxes (for pigs and chickens) that stay warm without the need for a 250w bulb.

Secure them like they are permanent. Use chains and not twine. Keep them out of the way of livestock that can disturb them.

Upgrade your breaker panel. At the recommendation of an electrician we installed an "Arc Fault Interrupter" breaker for the circuits in our barns where we have heat lamps connected. Unlike our previous GFI breaker which failed to trip when the fixture sparked, this type of breaker is made to trip. The downside is these breakers cost about \$40 instead of \$4.00.

Use heat lamps in buildings that are isolated from other buildings. For us this means having small detached brooder buildings for our chickens and a specific building for our sows/piglets. This is much preferred to brooding in our main barn where we store all of our grain, hay, freezers, tools, and other livestock.

Put a smoke detector in all buildings with the potential of fire. A really loud one with an external speaker is recommended but a standard battery operated one with an annually changed battery is a minimum.

Have at least one fire extinguisher at main entrances of all buildings. In our main barn we have one at each end. We use commercial rechargeable extinguishers and check them annually for a full charge. Learn how to use one and have them clearly marked.

Review your insurance policy and make sure you know what coverage you do and don't have. You may think you have more coverage than you actually do and don't want any surprises when you really need it. We don't insure everything but we do insure what we don't want to self-insure. ■



Chicks staying warm under an Ohio Brooder.
Photo by Michael Glos.



Three styles of heat lamps. Least expensive & riskiest (left) to most expensive & safest (right).
Photo by Michael Glos.

Make a decision on if you want to warm the ambient air or the animal, which will help you decide whether or not a heat lamp is the best fit for your system.



For questions about heat lamp safety and use, reach out to Amy at amb544@cornell.edu or 716-640-0844

Frost Bite Mitigation and Management in Ruminants

By Amy Barkley, Livestock Specialist, SWNYDLFC

January and February are the coldest months of the year for those in WNY, and our climate means that we often have nights that are not only cold, but also windy and snowy. For those calving, lambing, and kidding this time of year, frost bite on the youngsters is a real concern because the wind and snow lower the effective temperature below what we're reading on the thermometer. The good news is that while we can't control Mother Nature, we can manage around the worst weather to help reduce the risk of frostbite and assist animals that are affected.

Frostbite is not life-threatening but can cause disfiguration and potential issues later in life. Once young animals are born and dried off, their fluffed hair coat and belly full of mom's milk make them resilient. Before being dried off, newborns are susceptible to chilling. They're also vulnerable if they become damp and exposed to sub-freezing temperatures after being dried off. In extremely cold temperatures, frostbite may happen from exposure to the cold alone.

Ears, tails, and toes are the most isolated from the body's core and don't get the volume of blood flow needed to keep them protected. While the main part of the body is not usually affected by cold because of the sheer mass and blood flow, in very cold conditions, the body temperature may start to drop. An animal will move into preservation mode by keeping the core body temperature within operable range, which involves moving blood into the core and restricting it in the extremities. When this happens, tissues aren't warmed or oxygenated well and can freeze and die. The body naturally gets rid of dead tissues through self-amputations. While the nerves in the damaged tissue are dead, they are sensitive where the live tissue connects, making the condition painful.

Animals with symptoms of the beginnings of dry gangrene may show a red line on the skin around the affected area and the skin will feel very cold to the touch. Over time, the tissue becomes black and dry. Depending on the severity of the loss, pain the animal is in, and incidence of infection, intervention may be needed. This can include a veterinarian removing the dead tissue, treating with antibiotics to reduce the spread of infections, and prescribing pain medications to reduce discomfort. Keep watch over the affected areas for swelling, discoloration, and hair loss, and involve your veterinarian for a second opinion, especially for large affected areas or if the back legs are affected.

The highest-risk animal group is newborns, since they have a minimal amount of body fat and are born wet. If the weather is going to be below freezing, keep these tips in mind to reduce the incidence of frost bite:

- Keep young animals in a protected area out of cold, wind, and precipitation.
- Add a heat lamp in an area that young animals can access, but adults can't for safety reasons. Heat lamps are meant to heat the air around the animal to keep it warm, not heat the animal directly.
- Dry off newborns ASAP. Dampness intensifies the effects of cold. If you know animals are birthing, increase the frequency of checks to ensure youngsters are dried off.
- Ensure that all newborns are nursing. If they are not, check their body temperature and warm if needed so that they'll accept milk. If the mother refuses them, ensure they get colostrum and milk by supplemental feedings or grafting them onto another lactating female. All supplemental feed should be warmed to between 101 – 105 degrees Fahrenheit before offering it.
- If skin shows symptoms of frost bite, do not apply direct heat above 105 F or rub the skin vigorously. This can damage the tissues more. Applying direct heat and rubbing can be performed to increase the temperature of the core body, though.
- Frost damaged areas can be wrapped loosely in towels warmed by the dryer or a well-padded heating pad on low.
- Do not apply bandages to affected areas as to not interfere with circulation.
- Keep a newborn with previously frozen/thawed extremities in an area above freezing for a few days to prevent re-freezing, which is very common in vulnerable individuals in persistently cold temperatures.

When caught early enough and initial treatments are performed, the tissue may recover, rather than becoming gangrenous and falling off. It can take 3-6 weeks to determine where the exact line is between affected and normal tissue. Therefore, amputation is not usually recommended immediately. This all said, prevention is better than reaction and treatment. ■

Taking steps to reduce frostbite from occurring is better than reacting and attempting to reverse it.

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Most frostbite occurs on ears, back feet, and tails.



Kid with frostbitten ears.
Photo by Dr. Tatiana Stanton



Kid exhibiting missing portions of its back hooves due to frostbite.
Photo by Dr. Tatiana Stanton

BASICS OF BEEKEEPING

A FREE Live Seminar for Veterans

Wednesday,
February 26th, 2025

6pm – 7:30pm
Online webinar via Zoom

Registration is REQUIRED by
visiting tinyurl.com/FarmOpsBees
or call Kelly at 585-268-7644.

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Find out if beekeeping is right for you!

Are you curious about the art of beekeeping and its vital role in our ecosystem? Join us for an engaging seminar where we'll explore the basics of caring for bees, from hive management to harvesting honey. This session, led by experienced beekeeper and livestock management specialist with Cornell Cooperative Extension, Amy Barkley, will equip you with valuable insights to start your beekeeping efforts.

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Farm Ops

Farm Ops aims to support military service members and veterans who desire to explore and/or pursue agricultural vocations. Visit us on the web at smallfarms.cornell.edu/projects/farm-ops/

This is event is for NYS & NJ Veterans.

FENCING 101

A FREE Live Seminar for Veterans

Wednesdays,
March 19th and
March 26th, 2025

6pm – 7:30pm
Online webinars via Zoom

Registration is REQUIRED by visiting
tinyurl.com/FarmOpsFence1
or call Kelly at 585-268-7644.

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Southwest NY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Program



Learn The Basics of Choosing and Installing the RIGHT Livestock Fencing for Your Farm or Homestead!

How do you choose fencing that's right for you and your animals? How do you know which products you'll need to purchase and install? Join Cornell Cooperative Extension Specialists, Amy Barkley and Katelyn Walley, to learn more about fencing type, installation, maintenance, cost and product evaluation, and time requirements. This is a two part series.

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This is event is for NYS Veterans.

FarmOps is a Veteran Education Program from Cornell's Small Farms Program. SWNYDLFC is grateful to partner with them for these upcoming events!

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Reach out to Katelyn Walley for any questions at 716-640-0522 or by emailing kaw249@cornell.edu.

Practical Lessons Learned from Advanced Soil Health Training: Part 2

By Katelyn Miller, Field Crop & Forage Specialist, SWNYDLFC

In September, I discussed the soil health cohort I'm participating in and shared some valuable lessons I learned in the first session. In December, the second session took place, focusing on cover crops. It offered deeper insights into species selection, decision support tools, and root demonstrations. We also had the opportunity to connect with local producers who shared their experiences and advice for successfully implementing cover crops on their farms.

A significant part of the session was dedicated to cover crop decision support tools. These tools provide tailored recommendations for selecting cover crops based on climate, soil type, and other factors. The tool we focused on the most was the Species Selector Tool by the Northeast Cover Crop Council. This tool has you input:

- location
- USDA Plant Hardiness Zone
- cropping window
- goals—allowing you to select up to 3

This data will provide you with cover crop options available for your location. The image below is an example of the results you can receive. Its calendar formatting allows the visualization of crop establishment windows.



Additionally, we covered other tools from Climate Smart Farming and Precision Sustainable Agriculture. They included the winter cover crop planting scheduler, cover crop nitrogen calculator, and an economic decision support tool. Tools like these can be used to optimize practices and support better decision-making for enhanced farm productivity and sustainability.

An important aspect of cover crops is the role of their root systems. To better understand this, we had the opportunity during the session to observe a root demonstration. This allowed us to visualize how different cover crop species develop root systems that improve soil porosity, increase water infiltration, and enhance nutrient cycling. By examining the various roots, we gained a deeper understanding of their impact on soil structure. All the cover crops shown on the next page were grown for 56 days within a greenhouse. Take note of both the shoot and root growth. It's important to remember that there is a tradeoff between making roots and making shoots.

This article highlights topics like cover crop species selection, support tools, root demonstrations, and insights from producers.



As you plan for the future, keep in mind the role cover crops can play in improving your soil and crop health.

From left to right: radish, vetch, cereal rye

From left to right: Clover, oats

While we focus heavily on the soil health benefits of cover crops, there may be additional advantages. One area of interest is the impact of cover crops, specifically cereal rye, on pest management. Previous studies have shown that no-till soybeans planted into cereal rye residue can enhance weed management, improve soil health, and reduce labor requirements, particularly in organic systems. However, there has been limited data on how cereal rye might influence white mold suppression in no-till systems.

Recent research has shown cereal rye residue can reduce the incidence of sclerotia germination, a key factor in white mold development.

Sclerotia typically germinate under favorable conditions and lead to disease outbreaks in crops. However, if sclerotia fail to germinate or produce non-functional germination, they do not contribute viable inoculum. This essentially means that they die off over time. This reduction in inoculum could have long-term benefits, as it may lower the risk of disease recurrence in future crops. These findings highlight how cover crops like cereal rye can serve not only as a tool for improving soil health but also as a valuable component of integrated pest management strategies, further enhancing their value on the farm.

Finally, I want to share some of the insight I gained from the producer panel. We were able to hear from two New York farmers on their experiences with cover crops. During the discussion, there were three distinct messages that I gathered.

1. Selecting cover crops depends on a variety of factors. You should select based on your goals, soil type, and climate, but there are some additional factors to consider. Most notably, timing of planting, cost, and availability of seed. It's important to select an option that is cost effective in your budget and accessible. Additionally, the cover crop you select depends on the time of year in which its being planted.
2. Cover crops should be considered as part of your crop rotation, and not just as a filler. Ideally, cover crops should work as part of your full crop rotation and should help break up crop types and pest cycles.
3. It's important to have a plan to terminate for whatever method you decide (mowing, tillage, crimping, herbicides). Being prepared with your termination method will allow you to be prepared when the opportunity arises.

As you plan for the future, keep in mind the role cover crops can play in improving soil and crop health. If you're considering cover crops, now is the time to explore your options, plan, and take action. If you have questions about incorporating cover crops into your operation, contact Katelyn Miller by calling 716-640-2047 or by emailing km753@cornell.edu. ■

Resources:

<https://www.precisionsustainableag.org/decision-support-tools>

<https://northeastcovercrops.com/decision-tool/>

<http://climatesmartfarming.org/tools/csf-winter-cover-crop-planting-scheduler/>

<https://media2-production.mightynetworks.com/asset/10d53036-c16e-4913-b174-063dfeadbfa0/>

[Rolled_crimped_cereal_rye_residue_suppresses_white_mold_in_no-till_soybean_and_dry_bean.pdf](#)

Feel free to reach out to Katelyn Miller for any questions at 716-640-2047 or by emailing km753@cornell.edu.



Try using these tools while planning your cropping system to better tailor your cover crop choices based on your specific goals.

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) Training Program for Meat and Poultry Processors

February 17 & 18th, 2025 Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

Program participants will receive hands-on experience developing a HACCP plan. The course is recommended for meat and poultry plant management, HACCP coordinators, quality assurance/control personnel, sanitation management, line supervisors, and line operators employed by meat and poultry processing plants. The course is certified by the International HACCP Alliance and meets USDA requirements for HACCP training.

Spanish-to-English translation assistance for Spanish-speaking attendees is available.

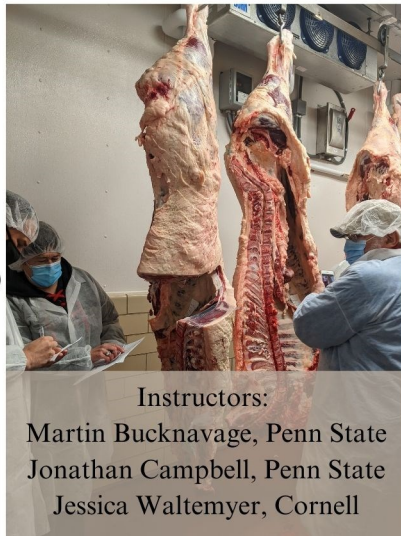
Registration fee:

\$525/person before Jan. 17
\$550/person after Jan. 17
\$400/person if company registers 3 or more employees.

NYS processor discount of \$100 per person for the first 10 NYS processors that register.

A light breakfast and lunch is included each day.

Register by Friday, February 7th at
<https://event.me/kz4LBk>



Instructors:

Martin Bucknavage, Penn State
Jonathan Campbell, Penn State
Jessica Waltemyer, Cornell

This material is based upon work supported by USDA/NIFA under Award Number 2022-70419-38562.



JOIN THE PROJECT!

farmersmarketresearch.cornell.edu

RESEARCH PROJECT



Gain valuable insights into your customers' shopping habits

- ✓ Receive free analysis of your market data
- ✓ Receive practical advice to increase your sales
- ✓ 1-on-1 consulting from the Cornell University team
- ✓ Access a dashboard of performance metrics (coming soon)



View Price Reports

Price Reports Benefit the Farm Community

Project data is aggregated and published into weekly and monthly price reports for fruit, vegetable, and meat products sold at NY farmers markets, along with grocery store prices. All farm and market identities are kept anonymous in public reporting.



Participant Requirements

Questions?
We're here to help!
Contact Matt LeRoux
mnl28@cornell.edu

- ✓ Farms using Square POS at NY farmers markets
- ✓ Items are clearly named and include the unit when by the each i.e. "Kale Bunch"
- ✓ Record every customer transaction at markets in real-time, including cash sales
- ✓ Use the "Locations" feature in Square



Scan to Join

Ready to increase your market sales?

To join, scan or go to farmersmarketresearch.cornell.edu to create an account and share access to your Square data. Our enrollment survey will walk you through each step!



United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture



College of Agriculture and Life Sciences



Dyson
Cornell
SC Johnson College of Business

This material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number 2021-68006-33891.



LIVE WEBINAR

MANAGING MYCOTOXINS

A GUIDE FOR LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS

FEBRUARY 27TH – MORE DETAILS TO FOLLOW

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This training can help employees build a HACCP plan, which is required to become a USDA inspected facility.

Farmer's market project data will help establish weekly average prices for farm products across the state, which you can review at farmersmarketresearch.cornell.edu.

Does Cropping System Matter for Biologicals?

By Joe Lawrence, Cornell PRO-DAIRY

It is hard to go anywhere in the field crops or dairy world without hearing about biologicals. In looking around for a general definition of these crop inputs, we find that Surendra Dara at Oregon State University wrote, "Biologicals in agriculture refer to any biotic and abiotic inputs of biological origin used for crop production or protection purposes."

There is a lot of interesting work going on in this area as we continue to uncover just how many microscopic organisms are all around us and just how important they are to everyday life — from human gut health to animal gut health to plant and soil health.

For the purposes of this discussion, the focus will be on the category of products related to soil amendments and biostimulants, which are promoted for their role in crop health and potential to enhance productivity. The growing body of knowledge around these products certainly provides more indications of why they could be beneficial; however, measurable results remain quite variable.

FIND APPLICABLE DATA

As with any crop input, it is prudent to ask for verifiable data on the expected benefits of a product. Anecdotes, testimonials, and side-by-side comparisons are not acceptable. Beyond this basic tenant of product evaluation, our ability to understand and measure what's going on in the soil (soil health) leads to many more questions regarding the impact of the cropping system on the potential response to many products in the biological category.

This is not a new phenomenon; soil properties and growing environment have long been recognized as variables that have led to very different fertility recommendations across the country. We manage clay soils differently than sandy soils, nitrogen management for corn varies by soil type and crop rotation, and so on.

Enter in the growing availability of methods to measure soil biological activity and we add a number of new variables to consider. Working with dairy systems in the Northeast, the role of organic inputs, namely manure, and crop rotation are top of mind. Soil health characteristics vary between these systems with manure inputs and perennial sod contributing to different soil microbial communities compared to annual row crop rotations with no manure inputs.

Based on the data I am aware of, in the instances where biological products have resulted in verifiable crop responses, the studies have been performed in annual row crop systems with no organic inputs.

For this reason, when a dairy producer asks about a given product, it is very difficult to provide guidance. Even if data is available showing a potential benefit in a corn and soybean system, for example, it is very difficult to have confidence the reported response will be mimicked in a dairy cropping system. I suggest that the producer not just ask for data but ask for data from similar cropping systems, and if the supplier cannot provide that, then they should consider setting up their own (replicated) trials on the farm.

Research on these type of crop inputs is challenging and time-consuming to perform. It is also important to remember that a lack of response is not equivalent to a lack of data. Products shown to work in row crop systems need to also be vetted in dairy systems and vice versa. The bottom line is that we just don't have all the data we need. But to partially answer my own question posed in the title, I believe that the system does matter, with more work needed to better understand when and how much.



PHOTO CREDIT: Katelyn Miller

Biologicals are gaining attention in agriculture, but more research is needed to understand how they perform across different farming systems.



If there is not data available for similar cropping systems to yours, consider setting up replicated trials on your own farm.

Weaning Basics

Are You Winning With Weaning?

By Katie Callero, Dairy Management Specialist



Figure 1: Diagram provided by Dr. Michael Steele

I had the opportunity before the holiday break to tune in to a webinar with Dr. Michael Steele, a calf expert and researcher at the University of Guelph. Dr. Steele was discussing new developments in calf nutrition and in doing so, challenged the current methods used on farms using the most up-to-date research to offer new weaning recommendations. Below are the webinar's 4 key points to help farms win with their weaning management strategies.

AGE

It is recommended that calves are weaned no younger than 8 weeks old. Calves younger than 8 weeks simply can't eat enough to properly prepare their metabolisms and stomach to transition onto a fully solid diet.

STEP-DOWN PROTOCOL

The best way to wean is with a step-down protocol that occurs over a 2-week period and includes multiple steps. A gradual weaning strategy is always preferred. Abrupt weaning disrupts the digestive microbial environment of the calf and is a high stress event for the calf, leading to reduced performance and more health challenges.

SOLID FEED

There is a very large variation in available starter compositions. The starter feed that pre-weaned calves are offered should generally be >85% concentrate and <30% starch. Starch content can vary from 10-50% in commercially available starters, so double check your starter meets the listed standards. If your calves develop bubbly manure, they could be having acidosis, which results from excess starch, and is a sign their feed composition likely needs to be adjusted.

HOUSING

Group or pair housing of calves is encouraged as it can help increase starter intake. The increased intake of starter is thought to be due to social learning and taking cues to eat from one another. Any changes to housing should occur before or after weaning is completed. Housing changes that coincide with weaning will cause additional stress for the calf and when they are too stressed, the calves won't eat starter. Dr. Steele recommends waiting at least a week after weaning before moving calves to new housing. ■

Northeast Fiber Exchange Fiber Sorting and Quality Training

February 28th 5:00pm-7:00pm

Cornell University | Frank B. Morrison Hall
507 Tower Road, Ithaca, NY 14853

Hudson Valley Textile Project and PRO-LIVESTOCK Small Ruminant Program will be hosting an event for Northeast Fiber Exchange

Certification Training: All farmers must participate in the certification training in order to sell to the NEFX Program. At this time the program will be accepting the following fiber types: Wool, Mohair, Alpaca, & Llama. Training will cover skirting and quality requirements, as well as best practices for quality fiber on the farm. All interested farmers are welcome.

Attendees will receive a free ASI "Code of Practice" book (one per farm)

Individual Registration for each attendee is required
Light Refreshments will be provided

For questions and to register, contact:

Jess Waltemyer at jrk272@cornell.edu

Abby Henderson abby.hvtextileproject@gmail.com

Wean calves no earlier than 8 weeks of age to reduce stress on the body and increase overall performance.

Starter composition can be adjusted as needed if the calves are not responding to it positively.



Webinar Series

To Keep or Not to Keep: Dairy Welfare and Profitability Considerations



Every Tuesday
January 21st to March 4th, 2025



12:00 EST



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- January 28 **Economics and Data for Culling** Dr. Miel Hostens
- February 4 **Transport Issues for Calves** Dr. Catie Cramer
- February 11 **Calf and Heifer Welfare at Culling** Margaret Quaassdorff
- February 18 **Cow Welfare at Culling** Dr. Julia Herman and Lindsay Ferlito
- February 25 **Managing Euthanasia** Drs. Jennifer Walker and Kaitlyn Lutz
- March 4 **Maximizing Harvest Value** Dr. Julia Herman

Whether or not to keep a dairy animal is a multi-faceted decision. Each week experts will address the different considerations in making that decision.

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You can register online at
tinyurl.com/2s4zkrfe
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Untangling Land Rental Rates, Ag Districts and
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Join us on January 29th for this informative webinar with Farm
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Sign up now by clicking [HERE](#) or scan the QR code.

Contact Jaime Welch at jjw288@cornell.edu with any questions.

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The webinar will be recorded, so even if you
can't make it live, still register to receive the
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This will be a FREE webinar taught by
Katelyn Walley that's suitable for farmers
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Join us as we hear from the Nichols Family! They will share their experiences with their two Lely Discovery collectors and the grant funds they used for installation.

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This is a FREE event - RSVP's are requested to prepare for materials, but not required. Call Katelyn at 716-640-0522 with any questions or concerns!

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