swnyteam@cornell.edu

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.

The **Equal Education and Employment Opportunity Statement** is our university commitment to a welcoming and supportive community for students, faculty and staff.

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Photo by Katelyn Miller

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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 585-268-7644 ext. 10.

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Southwest NY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Program

DAIRY SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY SHOWCASE

PRO DAIRY
Education & Applied Research

Guided facility walk through of new dairy systems and technologies for dairy farmers and industry partners.

TOPICS COVERED:

- Local organic dairy processing
- Robotic milking barn

NOVEMBER 4TH 2025
10 AM START

EDEN VALLEY CREAMERY
12540 DREDGE RD
SOUTH DAYTON, NY 14138

MILLER'S DAIRY FARM
6125 S ROAD
CHERRY CREEK, NY 14723

REGISTER AT:
TINYURL.COM/ CCEFALLTOUR
OR CALL KATIE CALLERO
AT 607-422-6788

REGISTRATION FEE:

FREE EVENT

This is a FREE event, and registration is required.

CROPS COWS & CRITTERS newsletter

Come see local organic dairy processing and a robotic milking barn.

The Tillage Toolbelt: Soil Structure

By John Pirrung, Field Technician, SWNYDLFC Team

Continuing this series from last month, we're taking a look at all of the differences between tilling and no-till systems to help you figure out which system is best for your farm. We previously looked at how tillage decisions impact nutrient cycling, and this time we're considering how the same decisions can change soil structure. Your choice to till or not to till can significantly change your soil structure, determining what kinds of challenges may appear or which may be avoided.

WHY IS SOIL STRUCTURE IMPORTANT?

The structure of your soil affects how well water, air, and nutrients move through the soil profile, which directly impacts plant growth. Poor soil structure can contribute to erosion, flooding, and weaker plants. Better soil structure supports healthier crops and can help your operations remain sustainable and more resilient in the face of extreme weather events.

UNDERSTANDING SOIL STRUCTURE:

When talking about soil structure, there are a few key concepts and processes that are important to understand:

Infiltration

What it is:

- Infiltration is the process by which water can penetrate the soil surface and move deeper underground, with the potential to become trapped in soil pores and made available over longer periods of time
- This is often measured as an infiltration rate, which is how fast water can penetrate into soil in a given period of time

Why it matters:

- Infiltration determines how much water can enter and become stored in the root zone
- Poor infiltration can force water to accumulate on the soil surface, flooding fields and contributing to erosion
- Better infiltration reduces surface runoff, and can allow water to percolate down and resupply underground water storage

Compaction

What it is:

- Soil compaction is the process of soil particles being pressed closer together, reducing available pore spaces
- It can be caused by heavy machinery, livestock trampling, and foot traffic
- Wet soils with poor aggregation are particularly vulnerable to compaction

Why it matters:

- Reduced pore space means that everything from roots and fungi to water and oxygen have more difficulty moving around
- Compacted soils exhibit restricted root growth, reduced water infiltration, poor drainage, inconsistent nutrient exchange, and less microbial habitat

Aggregate Stability

What it is:

- Aggregates are clumps of soil particles (organic matter, sand, silt, clay) that bind together in varying sizes, often as a result of biological activity (growing roots, earthworms, fungi)
- Aggregate Stability refers to how well the aggregates can resist breaking apart when exposed to disruptive forces, such as rain or tillage

Why it matters:

- Aggregates improve aeration and water infiltration, and make it easier for roots to penetrate deeper into the soil
- Stable aggregates resist erosion from wind or water, reducing soil loss
- Aggregates stabilize nutrients within pores and create habitats for beneficial microorganisms

Surface Crusting

What it is:

- Crusting is the formation of a thin, dense layer at the soil surface that has lower porosity and higher penetration resistance compared to the underlying soil
- Crusting can occur more easily when aggregates have been broken up, like after many freeze-thaw cycles in early spring

Why it matters:

- Hard crusts can reduce water infiltration and promote runoff and erosion
- Seedlings may struggle to push through crusts, leading to patchy germination
- Crusts reflect sunlight, reducing how quickly soil can warm up or dry out

Having plants in the soil, including cover crops, can dramatically improve infiltration rates.

Soil with low aggregate stability can become compacted very easily, causing drainage problems.

With these concepts in mind, now we can take a look at how tillage decisions change the structure of our soils.

WATER RETENTION & DRAINAGE

Tillage

Improves short-term drainage
- Temporarily improves water infiltration
- Reduces surface water runoff from previously crusted soils

Reduces long-term water retention
- Breaks up healthy soil aggregates
- Increases evaporation

No-till

Improves long-term water retention
- Reduces evaporation
- Surface residue assists with infiltration

Reduced drainage, especially in early years
- Slower infiltration at first due to dense surface
- Infiltration improves over time as aggregates form

SOIL TEMPERATURE

Tillage

Warms faster in spring
- Exposed soil + reduced moisture = quicker warming
- Helpful for earlier planting

No-till

Warms slower
- Crop residue reflects sunlight and retains moisture, both of which delay soil warming
- Can delay planting

SOIL AERATION

Tillage

Increased short-term aeration, especially near the surface
- Loosening the soil allows more oxygen to enter

Can lead to compaction over time
- Especially below the tilled layer (plow pan) reducing deep aeration

No-till

Will reduce surface aeration initially
- Surface compaction or residue layers can restrict airflow

Improved long-term aeration
- Root channels and earthworm activity enhance natural porosity

SOIL AGGREGATION

Tillage

Destroys soil aggregates
- Breaks down natural soil structure

Leads to crusting and compaction
- Compounds over time

No-till

Improves soil structure over time
- Allows aggregates to form and persist

Reduces erosion and crusting
- Residue protects soil and improves stability

As always, there's no one-size-fits-all answer. Consider what the most frequent or most challenging issues are for you and your farm. Are you finding that your soil is always too wet or too cold to plant on time? Then tilling may be the right pick for you. Are you struggling to retain enough water to get your crops through a dry spell? Then no-till might give you some better results. Think about the challenges that are costing you the most time and money, and see if your soil structure is contributing to those challenges.

Sources:
- https://extension.psu.edu/soil-quality-information
- https://extension.psu.edu/soil-health-soil-physical-properties
- https://extension.psu.edu/soil-crusting
- https://extension.arizona.edu/publication/key-soil-resiliency-understanding-soil-aggregate-stability
- https://extension.umn.edu/growing-small-grains/soil-crusting-and-emergence-problems
- https://www.canr.msu.edu/drainage/conventional-drainage/drainage-under-performance/impeded-infiltration-and-percolation

Photo by Kelly Bourne

Tilling can be a good fix for heavily crusted soils that see frequent flooding.

No-till management allows soil aggregates to stick around, reducing erosion and creating microbial habitat.

Fecal Egg Count Mobile Workshops
for Sheep and Goat Internal Parasites

Internal parasites are one of the most challenging and economically impactful concerns for sheep and goat owners. This workshop will explain why regularly testing fecal egg counts can help you with understanding your animals' parasite loads and dewormer resistance. Attendees have the opportunity to prepare and evaluate fresh fecal samples under the microscope and practice interpretations.

We will have fecal samples to evaluate and encourage you to bring some from your farm or homestead to practice with!

Tuesday, Oct. 21, 2025 **6pm - 8pm** CCE Erie 21 S. Grove St. East Aurora, NY Register by 10/19: https://tinyurl.com/FECWorkshopEastAurora	**Thursday, Oct. 30, 2025** **6pm - 8pm** CCE Chautauqua 241 James Ave Jamestown, NY Register by 10/28: https://tinyurl.com/FECWorkshopJamestown
Tuesday, Nov 4, 2025 **6pm - 8pm** CCE Steuben 20 E. Morris St. Bath, NY Register by 11/2: https://tinyurl.com/FECWorkshopBath	**Wednesday, Nov 5, 2025** **6pm - 8pm** CCE Cattaraugus 28 Parkside Drive Ellicottville, NY Register by 11/3: https://tinyurl.com/FECWorkshopEllicottville

These workshops are free of charge and registration is required.
For questions or to register, reach out to Amy Barkley, Livestock Specialist at 716-640-0844 or amb544@cornell.edu

NORTHEAST EXTENSION RISK MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

This work is supported by the Northeast Extension Risk Management project award no. 2024-70027-42540, from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

These are FREE events, and registration is required.

CROPS COWS & CRITTERS newsletter

Contact Amy Barkley with any questions:
716-640-0844
amb544@cornell.edu

Mooving Through Calving: Recognizing Labor Signs and When to Help

By Katie Callero, Dairy Management Specialist, SWNYDLFC Team

Great calving management has always been important for herd health, productivity, and profitability. Dr. Douglas Waterman of Virtus Nutrition recently wrote in Hoard's Dairyman that, "with today's economics—Angus Holstein calves selling for $900-$1200 and herd replacements hitting $3500-$4000—every single pregnancy matters more than ever." To protect these high-value animals and prevent costly vet visits or complications, producers should be able to identify and respond appropriately to each stage of calving.

Stages of Calving

There are 3 stages to every calving. Stage 1 is the "signs". This is when her pelvic ligaments begin to relax, and her cervix will dilate. The cow's teats will also distend and often will be leaking milk. Stage 2 is the delivery of the calf; it begins when the placenta is visible. You should expect the cow to be making progress every 30 minutes. If no progress is made in 30-45 minutes, the cow may be experiencing dystocia. Dystocia is the term used for a difficult birth. Stage 3 is the expulsion of the placenta which is expected within 12 hours after calving. If a cow has not delivered the placenta after 24 hours, it is considered a retained placenta. The key to navigating all three stages successfully is having consistent observation of your cows.

Understanding and Tracking Dystocia

It's also important to be aware of risk factors that can increase dystocia incidence ahead of time, so you can better observe high-risk cows. Risk factors for dystocia include body condition score (>3.5), dry period length (<45 days or >60 days), lactation number, twins, genetics, and previous dystocia. As always, recording when a cow does have a difficult calving is great for future reference and use in culling decisions. The best way to keep track of dystocia is with the calving ease score. University of Minnesota Extension defines the calving ease score on a scale of 1-5: 1-quick, easy birth with no assistance; 2-over two hours in labor, but no assistance; 3-minimum assistance, but no calving difficulty; 4-used obstetrical chains; 5-extremely difficult birth that required a mechanical puller. If a cow has been straining during Stage 2 of labor and has no visible progress, it is time to palpate the cow and assess the situation.

Safe Calving Assistance Techniques

When palpating a cow experiencing a difficult birth, remember to be clean, gentle, and use lots of lubrication. Correct positioning and posture of the calf are needed for successful delivery. Ideally, the calf should present head-first, spine to spine with the cow, and both front legs extended. If the calf is in an abnormal position, don't attempt to pull. When correcting flexed body parts, protect the uterus by covering the calf's teeth with your hand when fixing the head, or covering the end of a hoof when moving a leg, as these sharp areas can cause severe injury. Once the calf is in a suitable position to pull, put on two half hitches per limb if using chains. This helps distribute the pressure across a calf's leg and limits the chance of breaking anything. If you are unable to assist the cow successfully, call the veterinarian for additional medical interventions. Procedures may include epidural anesthesia, a cesarean section, or a fetotomy. Timely intervention during calving can help preserve the cow's life and her future in the herd.

To support farmers looking to strengthen and develop these critical skills, we are offering hands-on training opportunities. Keep an eye out for our hands-on transition cow management training, coming March 2026 in collaboration with Pro-Dairy. Our team also offers year-round on-farm training with a dystocia model to help you practice fixing different abnormal calf positions and delivering the calf with chains or a head snare. The training is only $25 to cover the maintenance of the model. Please reach out to Katie Callero at krc85@cornell.edu or 607-422-6788 to schedule an on-farm training.

When palpating a cow be clean, gentle, and use lots of lubrication.

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Request a hands-on calving training at your farm using our model (pictured above) for just $25!

Cornell Cooperative Extension Presents:

OPTIMIZING THE ECONOMIC RETURN OF PASTURE-RAISED SLOW-GROWTH AND CONVENTIONAL BROILERS

Thursday, November 13, 2025
6pm - 8pm via Zoom

Over the past three years, Cornell Cooperative Extension has worked with nearly 40 small farmers across NYS to gather information on the true costs of raising broilers (meat chickens) on pasture. This presentation is a summary of the findings of this research project.

We will share:

Statewide averages and benchmarks for both raising and selling meat chickens
The performance metrics for Cornish Cross and Slow Growth broilers raised on pasture
Common pitfalls when it comes to being profitable
Evidence-based suggestions to improve both performance and profitability

This webinar is FREE and registration is required.
A recording will be sent to all registrants.

Register at: **https://tinyurl.com/PastureRaisedBroilers**
For registering or questions reach out to Amy Barkley at amb544@cornell.edu or 716-640-0844

Cornell is an equal opportunity employer. For more information visit hr.cornell.edu/eeeo.

NORTHEAST SARE Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education

Farmer Grant Call for Proposals Open

Projects led by farmers

Projects must take place in Northeast

Awards up to $30,000

Test an idea on your farm that could impact farming in our region

Proposals due 5 p.m. EST Dec 9, 2025

northeast.sare.org/farmergrantcall

Soybean Cyst Nematode Sampling

Are you experiencing any of these symtoms in your soybeans?

- Yield loss - SCN can create yield loss of up to 30% with no above-ground symptoms
- Signs of stunting, yellowing, wiliting, white mold, and/or sudden death syndrome

It could be Soybean Cyst Nematode. **FREE sampling** is available to test for this pest. **Contact Katelyn Miller at 716-640-2047.**

The broiler webinar covers the results from nearly 40 farms collected over 3 years to come up with realistic benchmarks and state averages.

If you think you may have Soybean Cyst Nematode on your farm, our team can get it sampled for free.

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About Labor Roadshow IX

IN PERSON SESSIONS

In person events will run from 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM.

GREENWICH
DECEMBER 9
Elks Lodge

WATERTOWN
DECEMBER 10
Hilton Garden Inn

GENEVA
DECEMBER 17
Cornell AgriTech

BATAVIA
DECEMBER 18
Genesee Community College

ONLINE SESSIONS

DECEMBER 1 & 22 from 12–2 PM
Zoom webinar platform – access to both webinars is included with one onsite registration!

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

$75/person
Cash, check, and advance online payments will be accepted. Each registration includes onsite programming for one event date, access to two webinars, coffee, refreshments, and lunch provided.

Questions?
About program: cu-agworkforce@cornell.edu
About registration/payment: office@nedpa.org

AWDC
Agricultural Workforce Development Council of New York State

Event Highlights

AWDC's Labor Roadshow IX will dig deep into pressing issues that every farm employer needs to understand. Dynamic speakers will present and take questions on topics such as the following:

- Immigration and Farm/Family Preparedness
- Compliance Updates
- Unionization
- Employee Engagement and Improving Culture
- Employee Housing Operational Costs
- Pest Management in Employee Housing
- Legality of Employee Monitoring
- How to Interact with Regulators and the Public about Labor Issues

Visit our website for registration information:
agworkforce.cals.cornell.edu/labor-roadshow/

REGISTER NOW!

Questions about Ag Workforce Development?
Email cu-agworkforce@cornell.edu.

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Important and pressing on-farm labor topics will be covered during this in-person event.

Grants & Incentives for New York Agriculture

By Farm Credit East Knowledge Exchange

There are a number of grants and incentives available for Northeast agriculture businesses, but learning about their availability and navigating the application process can be a challenge. To help with this, Farm Credit East has released an update to its report identifying federal, regional and state grants, loan guarantees, and other incentives available to assist Northeast producers of all types and sizes.

This article is an excerpt from the document, focusing on funding opportunities available in New York. For a full list of opportunities, including sector-specific opportunities for states including, but not limited to New York, refer to Farm Credit East's publication online: "Grants & Incentives for Northeast Agriculture."

Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program Sponsor/Agency: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. Program funds are available for nonpoint source abatement and control projects that plan or implement Agricultural Best Management Practice Systems on New York State farms. All projects must consist of activities that will reduce, abate, control or prevent nonpoint source pollution origination from agricultural sources. Grants can cost share up to 75% of project costs or more if farmers contribute to the areas of planning or implementation. Funding Amount: up to 75% of project costs.

Agriculture Energy Audit Program Sponsor/Agency: New York State Energy and Research Development Authority. The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) offers free energy audits to identify energy efficiency measures for eligible farms and on-farm producers, including but not limited to dairies, orchards, greenhouses, vegetables, vineyards, grain dryers and poultry/egg. In addition, greenhouse facilities can receive a free benchmarking report that describes their energy use intensity and benchmarks their facility against an anonymous aggregate of peer facilities. Eligible Recipients: Farms who are customers of New York State investor-owned utilities and contribute to the electric System Benefits Charge (SBC).

Climate Resilient Farming Program Sponsor/Agency: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The goal of the CRP Program is to reduce the impact of agriculture on climate change and to increase resiliency of New York State farms in the face of a changing climate. Soil and Water Conservation Districts use the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Framework to plan and assess their environmental risks. CRF allows farmers to proactively address risks due to the changing climate while also mitigating their greenhouse gas emissions.

Dairy Advancement Program Sponsor/Agency: Cornell CALS PRO-DAIRY. The Dairy Advancement Program is an initiative of the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation designed to enhance profitability of New York dairy farms. Funding is made available for business planning/analysis, certification management or designing new/remodeled facilities. In the past, this program has been utilized for Farm Credit East Consulting Services. Eligible Recipients: New York Dairy Cattle Farm that ships milk. Funding Amount: Dependent on Project Type.

Farmers School Tax Credit (FSTC) Sponsor/Agency: New York State Department of Taxation and Finance. The FSTC is a credit that can be claimed on school district property taxes based on the amount of the taxes paid and the number of qualified acres. Eligible Recipients: Individuals or Businesses engage in the business of farming and paid school district taxes on qualified agricultural property. Funding Amount: Dependent on the number of qualified acres and the amount of school district property taxes paid.

Farmland Protection Implementation Grants Sponsor/Agency: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. Municipalities, counties, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and land trusts are eligible to apply for individual grants of up to $2 million to help offset the costs of conservation easement projects that protect viable agricultural land from being converted to non-agricultural use. Eligible Recipients: Dependent on Grant. Funding Amount: Dependent on Grant.

Farm-to-School Program Sponsor/Agency: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The New York State Farm-to-School Program was created to connect schools with local farms and food producers to strengthen local agriculture, improve student health, and promote regional food systems awareness. The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets provides financial assistance to New York State schools through New York State's Farm-to-School program. It also provides technical and promotional assistance to schools, farms, distributors and other supporting organizations to bring more local, nutritious, seasonally varied meals to New York students. Eligible Recipients:

Farm Credit East's updated publication "Grants & Incentives for Northeast Agriculture" includes opportunities for Southwestern New York farmers.

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The full publication is available at farmcrediteast.com.

•Kindergarten through Grade 12 Food Authorities •Public, Charter, and Not-for-Profit Schools •Indian Tribal Organizations •Other entities participating in the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, or the Summer Food Service Program •Non-for-profit entities working with school food authorities and eligible schools. Funding Amount: up to $100,000.

Investment Tax Credit (ITC) Sponsor/Agency: New York State Department of Agriculture. Credit equals 5% of investment (up to $350 million; 4% rate on amount over $350 million and for personal income taxpayers) on buildings and tangible personal property, acquired by purchase, with a useful life of four years or more and used in production, qualified film production facilities, waste treatment and pollution control property, or research and development property. Eligible Requirements: Individuals or Businesses who placed qualified property into service during the tax year. Funding Amount: 20% of investment credit base on qualifying property.

John May Farm Safety Fund Sponsor/Agency: New York Center for Agriculture and Health. Cost share funding for New York farmers that need financial help improving safety on their farms. After a NYCAMH farm safety audit occurs, 50% up to $5,000 of the cost to improve priority area concerns could be made available. Eligible Recipients: An active farmer who is a New York State resident, that has a gross annual farm income of $10,000-$350,000 or a dairy farm milking fewer than 1,000 cows. Funding Amount: up to $5,000 (must not exceed 50% of the estimated total project cost).

Milk Security Program Sponsor/Agency: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The main objective of the security program is to protect producers against loss of income in the event a milk dealer defaults in paying for milk received. Pursuant to Section 258-b of Agriculture and Markets Law, licensed dealers who purchase milk directly from producers or cooperatives are required to secure their purchases by either participating in the state's Milk Producers Security Fund (MPSF) or by filing full alternate security in the form of a bond or letter of credit. Milk sales between cooperatives are exempt from this security provision. Eligible Recipients: Licensed Dealers who purchase milk directly from producers or cooperatives.

National Grid Incentives Sponsor/Agency: National Grid. For businesses whose energy provider is National Grid, the company has a number of incentives for renewable energy projects or energy efficiency programs. Eligible Recipients: Dependent on Service/Rebate. Funding Amount: Dependent on Service/Rebate.

New York State Grown & Certified Program Sponsor/Agency: New York State Grown & Certified Program. The New York State Grown & Certified Seal indicates the product has been inspected for safe food handling and environmental stewardship. The label indicates that the food was grown in-state. Eligible Recipients: Producers whose products are grown and produced in New York State and participate in an environmental management program.

Nourish New York Sponsor/Agency: New York State Grown & Certified Program. A total of $147 million has been dedicated to the program so far. The funding allows New York's emergency food providers to continue to purchase surplus products from New York farmers and dairy manufacturers and deliver them to New York families in need. This program not only benefits the less fortunate but also provides a new market for farmers to sell excess products.

FVI Grant Program Sponsor/Agency: NY Farm Viability Institute. NYFVI proposals will be judged based on the project's potential to help NYFVI achieve its mission to help New York farms become more economically viable. NYFVI is most interested in projects that will create knowledge to quickly and directly benefit farmers through work in one of the five portfolio priority areas: •Improve Operational Practices •Foster Industry-wide Innovation •Incubate New Ideas •Increase Routes to Market and Improve Marketing Practices •Develop Human Capital Eligible Recipients: •Farmer Groups •Researchers and Educators •Organizations, Agencies, and Businesses Funding. Amount: $15,000-$125,000.

NYS Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) Sponsor/Agency: New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. NYSERDA has a number of programs to help farmers with energy conservation and renewable energy projects. Eligible Recipients: Dependent on Program. Funding Amount: Dependent on Program.

NYS Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices Sponsor/Agency: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)/Good Handling Practices (GHP) Certification Assistance Program is a cost-share/reimbursement program designed to assist New York State's specialty crop industry with the cost of a GAP/GHP food safety audit. Funding Amount: up to $2,000 the cost of the audit.

Rollover Protective Structure (ROPS) Retrofit Program Sponsor/Agency: National ROPS Program. The ROPS Rebate Program will rebate 70% of the cost of purchasing and installing the Rollover Protective Structure on farm

Continued on page 13...

While CCE can't write grant proposals for you, we can assist with answering your questions as you navigate the grant-writing process.

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Note that some federally funded grants have been paused or are under review. The listing reflects opportunities that are likely to be offered in the future.

Management Considerations for Immature and Frosted Corn Silage

By L. E. Chase, Cornell University Department of Animal Science

The 2025 growing season in New York has again not been "normal." Wet conditions delayed planting in many areas of the state. Later in the growing season, some areas were dry. On many farms, there are large differences in corn maturity between fields. There is a possibility that some corn will not reach "normal" maturity when it is harvested. Growing degree days in August and September will be key in determining maturity at harvest. An early frost will further complicate the situation.

What can we do to manage corn harvest in this situation? The key will be to apply the basic principles of harvest, storage and feeding of the 2025 corn crop. Dairy producers have been through this situation a few times in the last 15 years and have some experience in managing this situation. The key points to concentrate on for the 2025 corn crop are:

Nutrient Composition:

Immature corn will be wet (<30% DM), higher in crude protein, sugar, NDF and lower in starch than mature corn. NDF digestibility is difficult to predict due to environmental conditions at different phases of plant growth. Energy value of immature corn will be 80 - 95% of normal maturity corn silage.

Harvesting:

- Do everything possible to harvest corn silage at the right dry matter content. The target range for harvest is 32 - 38% dry matter (DM). The goal is for the average DM to be 34 - 36% in bunker silos.
- Use whole plant dry matter to determine when to harvest. With many hybrids, milk line is not a good indicator of harvest time.
- If plant dry matter is determined with a Koster tester, the value obtained is about 2 units higher than the actual plant dry matter. A DM of 33% using a Koster tester is about 31% DM in the plant. This needs to be considered when determining harvest time.
- Whole plant dry down rates are about 0.5% per day in early September, dry down rates will slow later in season. If the corn plant is 28% DM today, it will take about 8 days to reach 32% DM. Dry down rates are variable due to weather conditions. Check whole plant DM before starting to harvest.
- If the immature corn is harvest at <30% DM, kernel processing may not be needed.
- Monitor particle size and kernel breakage during harvest. This is the only way to determine if the settings are right.
- Kernel breakage should be >90%.
- Particle size distribution using the Penn State particle separator:
    - o 3 screens + pan
    - o Top sieve = 3 - 8% of total weight.
    - o 2nd sieve = 45 - 65% o 3rd sieve = 20 - 30%
    - o Pan = <10%
- You may need to recheck the settings during harvest since factors such as hybrid, stand density, maturity and DM influence particle size and kernel breakage.
- Consider the use of research proven bacterial silage inoculant to assist improving fermentation efficiency and dry matter recovery. Follow the directions for handling and use.
- Take some samples for forage analysis to characterize nutrient composition and planning the feeding program. Analyses should include DM, CP, NDF, starch and NDF digestibility.

Storage:

- Try to store immature and normal corn silage in separate facilities. This provides for better flexibility at feeding time and allocation to specific animal groups.
- Make sure you have enough packing tractor weight. The thumb rule is 800 lbs. of packing tractor weight for each ton of silage delivered per hour. If the filling rate is 100 tons/hour, you would need 80,000 lbs. of packing tractor.
- Pack in thin layers (maximum 5-7 inches).
- Consider covering the silo walls with plastic on the inside to minimize air infiltration through cracks and joints.
- Seal the silo with plastic and tires or the newer lower oxygen permeability cover.

Frosted Corn:

In some years, there is a killing frost before corn has reached maturity for harvest. Key points to consider in this situation are:

- The leaves will quickly turn brown and the plant will appear "dry". This gives a false reading on whole plant DM since the leaves are only 10 - 15% of the total plant weight on a DM basis. Most of the plant moisture is in the ear and stalk.
- Whole plant DM needs to be determined to assess when to harvest. Corn for silage should be >32% DM before starting harvest.
- Frost may kill some of the normal bacteria on the plant. A research proven inoculant may assist in getting a good fermentation started.

Our growing season has provided many challenges, with an increased likelihood for harvesting immature or frosted corn silage.

Leaves are only 10-15% of total plant weight, so when a plant appears “dry”, the ears may not be, giving a false reading of whole plant DM.

...from page 12 "...Immature & Frosted Corn Silage"

- Harvest as quickly as possible. This lowers the risk of the plant getting too dry and potential mold growth on the ear.
- Follow the guidelines listed above for packing and sealing the silo.

Mycotoxins:

The risk of mycotoxins increases when corn plants are subjected to stress. The 2025 growing season may have a higher potential for mycotoxins. There is some monitoring going on by companies and a better assessment should be available by late September or early October.

Summary:

- Harvest at >32% DM
- Monitor forage particle size and kernel breakage
- Take samples for forage analysis during harvest
- Store immature or frosted silage in separate storage facilities
- Pack and seal the silo
- Consider the use of a research proven inoculant
- Watch for more information on mycotoxin risk

...from page 11 "Grants & Incentives for New York Agriculture"

equipment. Funding Amount: 70% the cost of purchasing and installing the ROPS ($500 out of pocket cap).

Urban and Community Forestry Grants Sponsor/Agency: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. This reimbursement grant program focusses on partnerships, volunteers, community groups, professionals, and outreach and education because these are components of strong and sustainable community forestry programs. Eligible project categories include tree inventories, management plans, tree planting, maintenance and education programming for those who care for community trees. Eligible Recipients: •New York municipalities •Quasi-government entities •Not-for-Profit Corporations. Funding Amount: Dependent on Grant Program.

USDA Specialty Crop Block Program Sponsor/Agency: NY Farm Viability Institute. The New York Farm Viability Institute partnered with New York State's Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) to manage the New York State's USDA Specialty Crop Block Program. This program seeks work that will achieve the following outcomes: improve pest control & disease control processes, develop new seed varieties & specialty crops, expand specialty crop research and development, and improve environmental sustainability of specialty crops. Eligible Recipients: •Non-for-Profit Organizations •Not-for-Profit Educational Institutions •Local and Tribal Governments. Funding Amount: $50,000-$100,000.

If possible, store immature and normal corn silage separately for more flexibility at feedout.

This growing season was stressful on plants, increasing the risk of mycotoxins.

Determining Forage Interventions with Pen and Paper

By Amy Barkley, Team Leader and Livestock Specialist, SWNYDLFC Team

This year has been a bit of a rocky one for livestock farmers across SWNY concerning their forage harvests. Wet hayfields were impossible to move equipment over in the early part of the season, and first cutting was lower quality for many farmers who missed the ideal harvest window. Shortly after, hot, dry weather set in, stunting cool season forage growth. Many livestock farmers reported smaller than average subsequent cuttings, if they got any at all. It goes without saying that stored forage inventories across the region are lower than usual this year, and so before the cold weather sets in, it's time to calculate how much hay and baleage you have and see if it's enough to meet the needs of your sheep, goats, and cattle over the winter. Buying in hay this time of year to fill in any production loss will be much easier than trying to source it when it's February and you realize that you're going to run short. And, selling animals this time of year if you know you're going to run short of hay may be a smart move for your operation.

To calculate forage inventories is simple, and to do so, you'll need the following information:

- Number of bales
- Average weight of bales
- Dry Matter of bales (baleage is between 45%-60% dry matter, hay should be around 15% dry matter)
- Anticipated storage loss (see table 1) and feeding loss
- Number of animals on the farm and approximate weights
- Anticipated consumption of animals (see table 2)
- The number of days you anticipate having to feed this winter (6 months is a good place to start)

To calculate the amount of forage you have available:

- You'll first need to multiply the average weight of your bales by the number of bales you have. As an example, let's say that we have 500 small squares of dry hay that weigh 40 pounds each. That would be 20,000 pounds of hay on an as-fed basis.
- After the total weight of forage available is calculated, calculate the percentage of that forage that is dry matter. For example, if we know that the moisture of our dry hay is 12%, that means that the dry matter value will be calculated by taking the difference of 100% dry matter and 12% dry matter, which is 88%. Then, we will take that percentage as a decimal (.88 in this example), and multiply it by the weight of forage we have on an as-fed basis. For our example, that would be .88 x 20,000 =
- 17,600 pounds of dry matter available.
- The anticipated loss is determined from the sum of the loss expected during storage plus the anticipated feeding loss. The table below will help you estimate loss associated with storage. Feeding loss is based on experience. While storage loss estimates are pretty standard, feeding loss comes from factors including the feeder type, feeding area, and species. This number is unique to your farm. For our example, let's say that our hay is stored in the attic of a barn (0% loss) and our animals tend to waste 10%. Our loss factor is 0% + 10% = 10%, which means that our animals consume 90% of the forage we put up. The loss factor is then multiplied by the amount of dry matter available to get an estimate of the pounds of dry matter our animals have available to consume this winter. In our example, that's .9 x 17,600 = 15,840 pounds of feed available.

Type of Storage	Loss Factor
Inside on ground	5 to 7
Inside on crushed stone	3 to 5
Outside on ground, uncovered	20 to 35
Outside on ground, covered	15 to 35
Outside on stone, uncovered	13 to 20
Outside on stone, covered	10 to 17
Outside on other base, covered	12 to 20

Table 1. This loss table is based on unwrapped haybales. Wrapped bales will have little to no loss.
This table was created by Bill Halfman, University of Wisconsin.

The next step in the calculation process is to determine how much feed your animals will consume over the course of a day:

- First, list the number of animals you have and their production groups. For my example, I have 20 ewes that weigh 120 pounds each and 1 ram and 1 wether that weigh 150 pounds each. The example doesn't use lambs because in this hypothetical, they were lambed in the late winter, put out to pasture at weaning, and sold before winter. Idealistic, I know (:
- Next, determine the consumption of your livestock. The table below, complied from NRC (National Research Council) recommendations, gives general estimates of the consumption of the major grazing species classes

Determining the amount of forage you have helps you make decisions in regards to buying in forage or selling animals off before winter.

When calculating inventories, be conservative. Having leftover feed is better than having to scramble to find feed at the end of winter.

as the % of bodyweight per day. Our example ewes are gestating, and because they have a tendency to carry twins and triplets, and because they will be nursing while on stored feed, their feed needs will fall on the higher end of gestating and lactating range for sheep. Also note that animals tend to consume a larger volume of higher quality forage vs lower quality forage because lower quality forage stays in the gut longer, making them feel full... even if it's less nutritious. In this example, our hay is of moderate quality. That, plus the gestating considerations having me go with 4% here as % of dry matter intake per animal.

- Multiply the number of animals in each group by their individual weight and then by their anticipated consumption as a percent of bodyweight. Then, add those consumption values of the groups together to get your daily consumption. Our example flock has a group of 20 ewes x 120 pounds bodyweight x .04 = 96 pounds of dry matter for the ewes/day. The wether and ram are 300 total pounds x 0.035 = 10.5 pounds of feed for the males. That means that all the sheep on the farm are anticipated to consume 106.5 pounds of dry matter feed per day.

	Intact Males	Gestating or Dry Animals	Lactating Animals	Growing or Finishing Animals
Cattle	2.5%	2% - 2.5%	2.5% - 3%	2.5%
Sheep	3.5% - 4%	2% - 3.5%	3% - 5%	3% - 6%
Goats	2% - 3%	2% - 4%	2% - 3%	2.5% - 5%

Table 2. Nutrient values for the three major grazing species by production category. The values are derived from NRC recommendations. Generally, animals in the later part of gestation will require more nutrients or a higher volume of feed to meet their energy and protein needs. The same goes for animals that are expected to gain at a high rate vs a moderate or slow rate. Lactating animals with multiples require more feed than lactating animals with singles. Animals will eat more of a higher quality forage than of a lower quality forage.

Finally, calculate how much feed they will consume this winter and compare that number to the amount of forage you have available.

- I generally recommend that producers estimate for a late pasture green-up and an early move off pastures in the fall since we know that mother nature can be fickle. At this point, you can even estimate a set number of days for summer feeding if you find that your pastures normally enter a summer slump and/or calculate a set number of extra days in the case of drought. In our example, we're going to pretend that we have a nice mix of cool season pastures, silvopasture, and summer annuals, so we won't need to calculate for summer feed. The grazing season on our imaginary hilltop starts around May 20th, and ends around November 1st, since we stockpile. That gives us 200 days for the grazing season, or 165 days for the winter feeding season.
- Multiply the number of days on stored feed by the pounds you anticipate the animals to consume per day. Our little flock will consume 106.5 pounds of dry matter/day x 165 days = 17,572 pounds of dry matter will be needed this winter.
- Compare the results of your calculation to the amount of stored feed you have, and see how close you are! In our example, we have 15,840 pounds of dry matter available, and need 17,572 pounds of dry matter. That's really close, but if I had to choose in this example, I would pick up one more ton of forage just to be on the safe side. Sometimes, the amount of forage you need will be more than what you have, meaning you need to buy in forage or sell off animals. Other times, there is a large calculated excess of stored feed, which means you can keep it for insurance or sell some. This decision comes from your experience and comfort with risk.

As you're going through this series of calculations, and you're unsure where you fall in terms of moisture, loss, or animal weights, estimate on the higher ends for moisture, loss, and animal weights. This will make your calculation more conservative. It's better to have hay left over at the end of the year than it is to need to scramble at the last minute to secure feed. With the days moving towards crisp and cool, I highly recommend running these numbers as soon as you can if you haven't already.

If you need any assistance or have any questions, feel free to reach out to Amy Barkley at amb544@cornell.edu or 716-640-0844.

If you plan to use this year's forage to cover next year's summer slump, add those days to the total winter days on feed.

If you'd like assistance walking through this calculation for your farm, reach out to Amy Barkley.

Who Invited Knapweed?

By Katelyn Miller, Field Crop & Forage Specialist, SWNYDLFC Team

You've likely noticed this weed in your hayfields, pastures, on the roadside, or anywhere in between. Referred to as knapweed, it's an aggressive weed that spreads rapidly and reduces the quality of fresh and baled forages. But, calling it knapweed is only part of the story, as there are 21 species of knapweed present in North America. Each of these species is differentiated by their leaves, bracts, flower size and color. In New York State, we typically see spotted and brown knapweed.

In the late summer months, it easily stands out with its striking purple-pink colored flowers. Spotted knapweed is classified as a biennial to short-lived perennial, as it forms a rosette in the first year. Brown knapweed is a perennial that spreads by seed. So, what can we do about this class of weeds? This should not come as a surprise, but there is no silver bullet of control.

In the early 2000s, there was some research done at Cornell University, as well as farmer-led grants through SARE on controlling spotted knapweed in New York State. While slightly outdated, there are still some strong principles that can be applied today.

Those include:

Mowing: A classic weed management strategy designed to reduce weed seed development and spread. Make a pass when flowers appear to help cut the development of seeds. Late spring and late summer mowings are more effective than late spring and mid-summer mowing.

Fertility: Weeds thrive in any conditions. Make sure your soil can support your desirable species by having enough nutrition and the appropriate pH. This will make your forage more competitive against weeds.

Grazing Pressure: Young knapweed is relatively palatable to cattle. Encourage intensive grazing and/or apply a high stocking rate early in the season. Troy Bishopp with the National Grazing Lands Coalition (AKA The Grass Whisperer) is testing this out on his own farm currently. Be sure to closely manage this style of grazing so as to not hurt the longevity of your stand.

Herbicides: Recommending herbicides is tough for this weed, in part because of labeling. Products may have one species like spotted knapweed listed, but not brown knapweed (or vice versa) or have no knapweed species listed. The label is the law, and the weed that you are spraying for MUST be listed on the label, or it is considered off-label use. A *What's Cropping Up* blog post showed promise for the herbicide Milestone (aminopyralid) which is a synthetic auxin/growth regulator, which are Group 4's. It's the same site-of-action as 2,4-D and Banvel/Clarity (active ingredient dicamba) but is from a different chemical family. Unfortunately, this product is not listed for use in pastures in New York State, so it's not a viable option. The study conducted suggests that our Group 4's are not likely to have strong efficacy against knapweed, at least not alone in a spray tank.

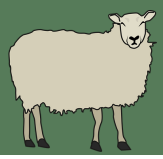
2025 Cornell Annual Sheep & Goat Symposium

Friday, October 31 - Sunday, November 2

Cornell PRO-Livestock and the Department of Animal Science is hosting the annual Cornell Sheep & Goat Symposium on the Ithaca, NY, campus. The symposium will include demonstrations and hands-on sessions for beginner and veteran goat & sheep farmers, as well as presentations on such topics as farm biosecurity, parasite management, quality fiber production, milk production systems, and more.

For details & registration: **https://swnydlfc.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=2661**

Goat & sheep raisers & industry stakeholders are welcome to register for the whole symposium or for individual days.



Cornell University Campus
Ithaca, NY

There is no silver bullet for the management of any weed. They require an integrated approach.

If you have any questions about knapweed or other pasture weeds, contact Katelyn Miller at 716-640-2047.

CROPS COWS & CRITTERS newsletter

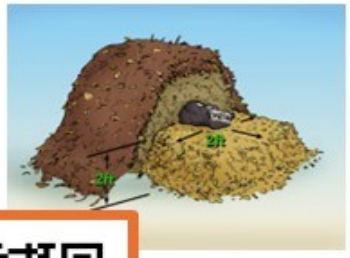
Animal Mortality Composting Demo

at Phillips Family Farm Inc., North Collins, NY

Thursday, November 6, 2025
10am – 12pm

Join us as we demonstrate the proper ways to run your animal mortality compost pile. We will share how to:

- Properly site and design a pad
- Select materials to construct a bioactive pile
- Add livestock to the pile
- Evaluate pile success
- Identify common pitfalls to proper composting
- Available opportunities to get assistance with pile design and construction



Register now!

This event is FREE to attend. Registration is required.

Register at this link:
https://tinyurl.com/AnimalComposting2025

For questions or to register over the phone/email, reach out to Kelly Torrey at 585-268-7644 ext 10 or klb288@cornell.edu.

Western New York CROP MANAGEMENT | PRODAIRY | Soil and Water Conservation Districts in New York State | Cornell Cooperative Extension – Southwest NY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Program

This event is FREE to attend and registration is required.

CROPS COWS & CRITTERS newsletter

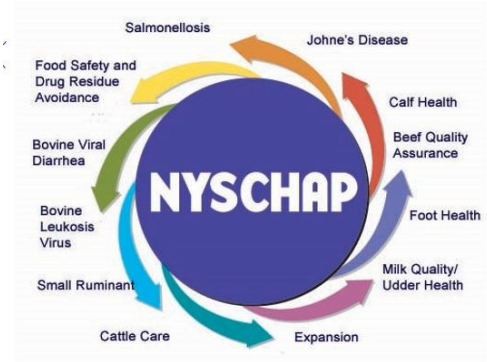
If you have any questions contact Kelly
klb288@cornell.edu
585-268-7644 ext. 10

New York State Cattle Health Assurance Program

The New York State Cattle Health Assurance Program (NYSCHAP) is an integrated disease prevention program that utilizes a team of advisors to develop a farm-specific herd health plan.

The objectives of this integrated herd plan are to:

- Increase the herd's health, productivity and profitability
- Assure food safety, public health and consumer confidence in dairy products
- Promote environmental stewardship



Farmers participating in this program can access reduced cost annual veterinary visits with their herd and local Ag and Markets veterinarians. Common consultation topics include individualized vaccine program development, biosecurity recommendations, and breeding programs.

To enroll in NYSCHAP, contact your herd veterinarian. They will then make arrangements with the regional field veterinarian from the Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Participate in a survey of farmers in New York State focused on farmer views, experiences, and usage of pesticides, specifically NEONICOTINOID SEED TREATMENTS

NEONIC SURVEY

The survey data will be utilized to understand farmer's perspectives better on the environment, the role of government in farming, trust in science, and knowledge and current practices of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) to better inform the development of on-farm research trials and extension education programs in the future.

Neonicotinoid seed treatments are used to control soil-borne insects and include active ingredients such as clothianidin, imidacloprid, and thiamethoxam. In 2029, neonicotinoid seed treatments will be prohibited for corn, soybeans, and wheat seeds. After 2029, farmers who wish to plant with neonicotinoid seed treatments may request a waiver.

There are two ways to get to the survey - use this web address or the QR code:

https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_72N2yNt0344QERM?Q_CHL=qr

Note: For questions/concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at 607-255-5138 or access their website at http://www.irb.cornell.edu. Concerns or complaints can be submitted anonymously through Ethicspoint online at www.hotline.cornell.edu or by calling toll free at 1-866-293-3077.

Farmers participating in NYSCHAP need to have a herd veterinarian identified in order to participate in the program.

Answering this survey will aid in our understanding of shaping education around this topic moving forward.

This information is annually shared in our newsletter as requested by the USPS and is not a misprint. Thank you!

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CROPS COWS & CRITTERS newsletter

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