



COWS CROPS & CRITTERS



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

Cornell Cooperative Extension | Southwest New York Dairy, Livestock & Field Crops Program



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Photo by Katelyn Miller

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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.

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EPA APPROVES FEDERAL REGISTRATION FOR OVER-THE-TOP DICAMBA APPLICATION

By Katelyn Miller, Field Crops & Forage Specialist

You may recall in 2024, the U.S. District Court vacated registrations for three dicamba containing products (XtendiMax, Engenia and Tavium) for over-the-top (OTT) applications in dicamba tolerant soybeans. Fast forward to February 6, 2026, the EPA has approved three OTT products in soybeans and cotton for the next two growing seasons. These products include:

- Stryax (Bayer)
- Engenia (BASF)
- Tavium (Syngenta)

This approval is for one specific use, as they are not introducing a new product onto the market or bringing a product back that was gone. Dicamba has continually remained on the market for other uses. The new piece is the strength of environmental protections, being referred to as the "strongest protections in agency history". Dicamba products have ecological risks associated with drift and volatility, hence the strong restrictions behind product use. This registration is only extended for the next two growing seasons (2026 & 2027) and is subject to additional review during this time.

So, what do these new restrictions look like?

As I mentioned, there are ecological risks associated with dicamba use, so restrictions are designed to address these concerns. Below is a condensed list from the EPA bulletin stating restrictions shared on the updated label for OTT applications in soybeans.

- Maximum 1 pound/acre can be applied per year. Only two applications are allowed per season, with a maximum rate of 0.5 pounds/acre.
- 40 ounces/acre of a Volatility Reduction Agent must be included in the tank.
- When temperatures are between 85° - 95°F, only 50% of your acreage can be sprayed. You must wait two days before treating the rest of the acres. When temperatures exceed 95°F, no applications can be made.
- For every treated field, mitigation points from EPA's conservation practices menu (<https://www.epa.gov/pesticides/mitigation-menu>) need to be implemented. At least 3 must be earned for each field, with 6 points required in areas with endangered species. This will be where PULA's (pesticide use limitation areas) reside.
- There is no spraying within 240 feet of the downwind edge of the field. If dicamba-sensitive crops are downwind, this product cannot be sprayed.
- Spraying is prohibited within 48 hours of expected rain, when soil is saturated, within 1 hour after sunrise or 2 hours before sunset, and during temperature inversions.
- Required wind speed must be between 3-10 mph.

- Nozzle use must be coarse or coarser, and spray release must be no higher than 2 feet above the ground or crop canopy.
- Ammonium sulfate (AMS) cannot be in the tank mix.
- No aerial application is permitted.

For applicators, annual training will be required. This label is a preview of the scrutiny that all pesticide products will be undergoing because of enforcement of the Endangered Species Act in pesticide registrations by the EPA. In this progressing age of pesticide application, recordkeeping will continue to be a crucial component, as records of every application must be kept ensuring enforcement of the above restrictions, and to remain in compliance with all label requirements.

Its important to note that access to these products won't happen immediately. Even though they are approved federally, it still has to go through registration in NYS. Discussions with industry folks who sell these products have shared that its unlikely these products will be registered and fully available for use in the 2026 growing season, with an estimated timeline of 4-6 months to get NYS registration. While there is no longer restrictions on date of when these products can be applied, under this timeline, they'll likely become available too late this growing season to have an impact in your spray program.

Resources:

<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-implements-strongest-protections-agency-history-over-top-dicamba-use-cotton-and> <https://www.epa.gov/ingredients-used-pesticide-products/registration-dicamba-use-dicamba-tolerant-crops>



Photo by Katelyn Miller

DICAMBA HAS REMAINED AVAILABLE, BUT THE EPA HAS APPROVED FEDERAL REGISTRATION FOR OTT APPLICATIONS.



THESE UPDATES ARE A PREVIEW OF THE SCRUTINY THAT ALL PESTICIDE PRODUCTS WILL BE UNDERGOING IN THEIR ESA REVIEW.

UNDERSTANDING FIELD TRIAL DATA: A PRODUCER'S GUIDE

By Katelyn Miller, Field Crops & Forage Specialist

A few winters ago, I heard a presentation from Jaime Cummings that reviewed fungicide trial data that has continued to stick with me. Her presentation covered interpreting data from various corn trials; diving into what makes good data, the questions to ask, and determining if meaningful data was collected. Having completed a statistics class this fall, I have developed a different understanding that I haven't had previously when it comes to interpreting research data, which is what renewed my interest in this topic.

You all have consultants and salesmen (or saleswoman) showing up on farm, receive newsletters chalked full of articles (thanks for reading CCC by the way!), and attend winter meetings where data on best management practices or products are shared with you, in which you have to make a determination of if it's something that fits into your operation. Knowing all of this, being able to disseminate the information that's being shared is critical to making this determination.

Field studies allow us to measure real world impact over controlled environments (like greenhouse studies), but both have their place. For in-field research, there are a multitude of factors that need to be considered to determine the quality of data being provided.

•**Plot setup:** Randomized, replicated plots within a field or across locations remove unconscious bias that may be caused from trial setup or natural variability in field, including soil types, slopes, fertility, and moisture.

•**Controls:** In a study, there should be a comparison against an untreated check or a standard benchmark. Without comparing data against a "normal", there is no way to know where the observed responses came from. Was it the treatment, weather, fertility, management? If a baseline isn't clear, then the results aren't particularly useful.

•**Repetition:** As we know, no year or field is alike. With data spanning over multiple years, and in various environments, there can be more confidence in the results. Single-site, single year data can be heavily influenced by weather patterns, disease pressures, or soil conditions attributed to that season.

•**Experimental Design:** Look for explanations of the study: what rates, plot size, timing, etcetera are used. Was the equipment used similar to what you use? Is it agronomically realistic? When information is missing, it can be difficult to interpret or replicate.

•**Demonstrations:** Demonstrations serve as valuable learning tools, but they are not the same as scientific experiments. Using side-by-side strips without repetition or a treated versus check area do serve a purpose, as they show what can happen, but what they don't highlight is what will most likely happen.

•**Statistical Analysis:** Information beyond yield averages should be shared, as there is data beyond them. Look for

statistical significance, such as least significant difference, p-values, or confidence intervals, along with any measures of variability. Just because one variety yielded more than the other doesn't mean the difference was large enough for it to be a factor of consideration.

•**Transparency:** Transparency matters, no matter what the result is. This comes to reporting what the methods and results were, regardless of "good" or "bad" conclusions.

•**Verbiage:** Be conscientious of what is being shared with you. Watch for selective reporting of best performing locations, claims based only on testimonials, and percent increases without numerical data.

Just because data doesn't specifically align with the considerations laid out, doesn't mean the results are automatically invalidated. Ask questions, think critically.

An additional thing to think about is how data is presented, as how its shared in graphs is important to interpretation as well. It can be easy to misinterpret, often lead to poor data representation, or fail to represent the whole story. Things to be on the lookout for include odd values listed on the x-axis or y-axis, a lack of a legend, or charts that are inappropriate for the data being shown.

Now, as I alluded to above, a proper statistical analysis is important to determining quality data. I feel as though statistical terms get casually thrown around, but I think it's important to take time to break down the definitions and give some context to what they mean.

p-value: (probability value) a number indicating the probability that the result happened by chance. A lower p-value means higher confidence that the treatment is what caused the result.

least significant difference: (LSD) the minimum difference in yield needed between two treatments to say that one is truly different than the other.

coefficient of variation: (CV) a measure of how variation is in the data. When the CV is low, that means that the results were consistent, while high values suggest high field variability.

standard deviation: (SD) a measure of how spread out the individual yields are from the average for a given group. When the value is low, yields were close to the average, while a high SD value means yields were inconsistent.

significance level: (confidence level) tells you how confident you are that the treatment worked, rather than the results being due to random, uncontrolled factors.

least square means: adjusted average values that estimate with the mean performance would be if the dataset was perfectly balanced.

Daily, you all are sorting through information and having to use that to make management decisions. Being able to effectively interpret and analyze the information shared with you is an important skill. When presented with data, ask lots of questions!

AN IMPORTANT SKILL FOR MAKING THESE DECISIONS IS BEING ABLE TO INTERPRET RESEARCH DATA, ENSURING THAT ITS SCIENTIFICALLY SUPPORTED.



WHEN DATA IS BEING PRESENTED TO YOU, ASK QUESTIONS AND THINK CRITICALLY.

THE DIRT ON DAIRY COW HYGIENE

By Katie Callero, Dairy Management Specialist

The inspiration for this article came from watching a video on social media where a homesteader was sharing a video of her milking her single dairy cow. The comment section was filled with remarks about how clean her cow was which led to one person leaving a comment expressing concern about how dirty most cows must be if that was the prevailing comment type. As most people who work with cows on a regular basis understand, it is impossible to keep them looking like a perfectly manicured show cow all the time but how dirty is actually too dirty? Cow hygiene isn't just for appearance; it is used as one of many metrics of cow welfare on a farm. An excessively dirty cow can face milk quality challenges and signal that their bedding conditions may not be the greatest. One way to objectively assess cleanliness and identify areas for improvement is through standardized hygiene scoring.

Scoring Cleanliness

The National Dairy Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (FARM) Animal Care Reference Manual 5 contains the cow hygiene scoring guidelines that are used during FARM evaluations. The FARM scores are as follows: "Score 1: Clean – Mud or manure does not exceed 11 inches in length in the hock or flank area, Score 2: Moderate – Mud or manure exceeds 11 inches in length in a single area (hock or flank), and Score 3: Very Dirty – Mud or manure exceeds 11 inches in length in both the hock and flank". I appreciate the more measurable approach that the FARM program rubric uses but I find it a bit more difficult to casually employ on your own farm for managing cow cleanliness. I prefer the Cow Cleanliness Assessment from the Canadian Bovine Mastitis Research Network (CBMRN) that I have added to this article, as it has nice photos to help distinguish between the different score levels. When scoring cows using the attached CBMRN cleanliness rubric, you should be aiming for a standard of less than 10% of cows with udder score of 3 and 4, less than 10% of cows with flanks/hips score of 3 and 4, and less than 50% of cows with hind legs score of 3 and 4. If your herd is less than 100 cows it is best to score all of the cows, if your herd is larger than that you should assess 25% of the cows. Once hygiene scores are collected, the next step is understanding what influences those results.

Management Strategies

Factors that can affect cleanliness are the comfort and cleanliness of the stall, amount and type of bedding, manure consistency, cleanliness of alleys, space allowance per cow, and amount of hair on the udder. The Facility Characteristics and Cow Comfort on U.S. Dairy Operations Report in 2007 by National Animal Health

Cow Cleanliness Assessment



The cleanliness of cows has a significant impact on udder health and more particularly on the rate of environmental mastitis. Maintaining a clean udder and legs helps reducing the spread of environmental pathogens to the teat canal. Depending on what part of the cow is soiled, it is possible to determine what areas of the barn have an inadequate level of cleanliness, therefore appropriate corrective action can be taken.

	1	2	3	4	
Udder					Udder cleanliness (back and sides) is an indicator of the cleanliness of stalls and bedding. (Examine right before milking) If the standard is not met, check: • Cleanliness of stalls • Amount of bedding • Need to shave/sing udder hair • Manure consistency
Hind legs					Hind legs cleanliness is an indicator of the cleanliness of alleyways and the length of tie stalls. If the standard is not met, check: • Cleanliness of alleyways and exterior areas • Cleanliness of holding area • Dimension of stalls • Manure consistency
Flanks and hips					Flanks and hips cleanliness is an indicator of the cleanliness of stalls and bedding. If the standard is not met, check: • Cleanliness of stalls • Amount of bedding • Manure consistency

Adapted from fact sheets produced by the faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Wisconsin, and Pfizer Animal Health. Most photos courtesy of Pfizer Animal Health.
Photo credits: "Less Mastitis, Better Milk" (Pierre Lévesque, 2004), distributed by Hoar's Dairyman (www.hoards.com).

Monitoring System (NAHMS) reported that "the lowest percentage of cows with a hygiene score of 3 were on operations that bedded stalls with coarse sand, composted manure, or dried manure (primarily freestall operations)" whereas cows that were bedded with straw, sawdust, or fine sand typically had dirtier cows. The NAHMS report also found that as bedding quantity and stall condition decreased the percentage of dirty cows increased. These findings emphasize that both bedding type and bedding management frequency play a direct role in overall cow cleanliness.

Ultimately, clean cows do not happen by accident. They are the result of intentional facility design, consistent bedding management, and thoughtful daily management. When hygiene scores begin to slip, that often serves as an early indicator that management adjustments are needed before milk quality and cow welfare is affected.

COW CLEANLINESS IS A GOOD INDICATOR OF COW WELFARE.



BEDDING TYPE AND BEDDING MANAGEMENT PLAY A BIG ROLE IN COW HYGIENE.

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

By Amy Barkley, Livestock Specialist

Poultry is a low-cost, rapid-return enterprise for small farms in the Northeast. The 2022 Ag Census indicated that there were 825 farms rearing broilers in New York alone. Of those, 81% are classified as small broiler enterprises (<2,000 birds/year). These enterprises don't benefit from the economies of scale like larger producers, so input costs and retail values must be carefully considered. Many times, the true costs of production are not evaluated in enterprise budgets, or even known to the farmer, resulting in farm income losses. Slow growth and Cornish-type (also called conventional) broilers have different efficiencies, which are impacted by genetics, diet, management style, and age at harvest. Value-added processing allowed under the 1,000 bird exemption as well as processing method (on-farm vs outsourcing) can also impact profit margins. Deficient understanding of the optimization of these operations can result in substantial financial loss over many years, and the ultimate demise of small, local broiler enterprises.

This three-year-long project followed 36 pastured broiler farms across New York State, each of whom raised 4 flocks over 2 years. Twenty-eight farms raised traditional Cornish-type broilers on pasture, an additional 6 raised slow-growth broilers, and 2 farmers raised both varieties. Hatchery and breed of choice was selected by the farm, as were pricing and sales outlets. Slow growth breeds consisted of Royal Grey Broilers, Royal Red Broilers, Freedom Rangers, Kosher Kings, Meyer's Red Broiler, Red Broilers, and Red Jackies.

In year 1 farmers collected production, processing, marketing, and sales data on their flocks to determine their true costs of production. Those financial indicators were benchmarked against the average costs of production from the other pastured broiler farms on the project. Following the first production year, each farmer met with their local extension educator to determine where they could decrease costs and increase income. These changes were implemented for year 2 flocks. Production, processing, marketing, and sales data were collected on these new flocks to benchmark against the previous years' data and the statewide averages. From there, it could be determined how much the adjusted farm practices increased their enterprise income

PROJECT CONCLUSIONS

Performance:

- Mortality was the leading cause of production losses in our study, with predators being the primary reason for bird losses later in the growing cycle and poor brooder management and shipping stress being the causes earlier in the cycle. Reducing mortalities later

in grow-out will reduce the financial losses for a flock. Setting chicks up for success in the brooder will pay dividends for the producer at harvest time.

- Our project revealed that the losses in raising pastured poultry far exceed those that are outlined by commercial production guides. While commercial guides target a 2% mortality rate, the percentage of individual flocks with mortality numbers higher than 10% were 42% - 57.4% of all flocks. Rates higher than 25% were found in 0% - 23% of all flocks. There was no obvious difference between the mortality rates by year for Cornish cross and slow growth broilers.
- There are opportunities to decrease the feed bill and optimize growth by providing a feed with a protein concentration that is matched to the age of the flock.
- Managing brooders to improve conditions (warmer, more space, less moisture) can help set young birds up for success on pasture. Disease and unthriftiness resulting from poor brooder management can result in depressed weight gain and finished weights.
- Targeting an average finished weight per flock rather than an average flock age can help producers meet their goals for pounds of chicken produced in a season. Seasonal temperature and precipitation impact the rate at which broiler chickens grow, and are not always predictable.
- All male flocks tend to finish out birds that are significantly heavier (1.37-1.75 pounds more) and are slightly more feed efficient than all female flocks, which may be a strategy that can be used by producers to get more pounds of meat from their production system.
- Slow growth chickens take about 50% longer to raise out than Cornish cross chickens (average of 10.7 weeks vs 7.4 weeks) to achieve similar finished weights and are less feed efficient (2.47 pounds of feed per pound of live gain for slow growth birds vs 2.10 pounds of feed per pound of live gain for Cornish cross birds).
- Average carcass yield from live was 74.3% for Cornish crosses and 67.5% for slow growth breeds.
- When cut up, the carcasses of Cornish cross birds yield 6.8% more saleable parts than those of slow growth chickens. Slow growth chickens had a larger portion of leg meat as a percentage of the whole carcass vs the Cornish cross. Parting out carcasses with more bone-in, skin-on cuts results in a larger percentage of the whole bird to sell.

DEATH LOSSES ARE VERY HIGH IN PASTURE RAISED POULTRY SYSTEMS AND MUST BE BUDGETED FOR.



KEEPING CLOSE TRACK OF ALL ENTERPRISE EXPENSES, INCLUDING THOSE THAT AREN'T DIRECTLY WRITTEN OUT OF THE CHECKBOOK, IS IMPORTANT!

Financial:

- Accurate recordkeeping was the most challenging part of this project for farmers. Many farmers commented that there were more input costs associated with raising broiler chickens than they'd initially realized. While 69% of farms operated a profitable broiler enterprise when unpaid labor was excluded, only 26% remained profitable once non-cash labor was included, valued at a minimum wage of \$15 per hour.
- Farmers who knew their true costs of production were able to more critically evaluate their enterprise and make changes that led them to be more profitable.
- On average, farmers on the project improved their income per broiler sold by \$7.29 (+/- 2.19). With an average flock on the project containing 101 birds, that is a total increased average income of \$736.29 (+/- \$221.19) per flock.
- 81% of the farmers on the project increased their profitability from year 1 to year 2. Small, incremental improvements helped to accomplish this goal. However, even though profitability increased, the average profit per chicken was \$1.26 per bird before labor was taken into consideration.
- The biggest changes that our farmers made from year 1 to year 2 included recordkeeping (39%), time management and scaling the enterprise (23%),

improving processing or pasturing equipment (14%), and improving feeding regimes and general health related parameters for the flock (16%). Interestingly, market aggregation and collective purchasing, which are ways to decrease costs and improve access to markets, were not identified by the producers as pathways to profitability.

- When farmers were asked about the changes they'd make into year 3 and beyond, the categories remained the same as they did at the end of year 1, with a shift away from record keeping improvements (down to 30% from 31%) and towards feed and health related changes (increase to 31% from 23%).

This 3-year project gave our project team the opportunity to work with many farmers from our region, and gave us valuable insight into what small, pastured broiler enterprises look like for NYS farmers. The full project report, including tables, charts, and data conclusions for each area of production and pricing analyzed, can be viewed at <https://projects.sare.org/project-reports/lne22-435/>. For a printed or emailed copy of the report, reach out to Amy Barkley at amb544@cornell.edu or (716) 640-0844.

Collaborators on financial data analysis and conclusions included in this report include Katelyn Walley-Stoll, Ag Team Leader, CCE Chautauqua and John Pirrung, SWNYDLFC Research Technician.



This grant work was supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, through the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program under subaward number LNE22-435.

Photos by: Amy Barkley



PRICING YOUR CHICKEN BASED ON WHAT YOUR NEIGHBORS OR LOCAL GROCERY STORE ARE CHARGING CAN RESULT IN A FINANCIAL LOSS FOR YOUR POULTRY ENTERPRISE.



FOR A PAPER VERSION OF THE FULL REPORT, PLEASE CALL OR EMAIL AMY BARKLEY AT AMB544@CORNELL.EDU OR 716-640-0844

LEAN MANAGEMENT FOR DAIRY

By Kate McDonald Polakiewicz

I participated in Cornell Workforce Development's *Lean Management for Dairy* workshop in February. Lean Management, often referred to simply as "Lean", is a methodology frequently used in the business world to add value, maximize efficiency, and trim waste. How can applying principles of Lean Management work for the dairy industry in southwestern New York, and what could taking a Lean approach mean for your business?

Running a dairy farm is a constant balancing act. You're managing cows, crops, employees, equipment, weather, milk prices, regulations — and somehow trying to get consistent, high-quality milk out the door every single day. There's not a lot of room for wasted time, wasted feed, or wasted effort.

Lean focuses on a central question: does this activity create value? On a dairy, value means producing high-quality milk efficiently, safely, and sustainably. Anything that doesn't directly support that goal is considered waste.

Waste doesn't always have to look obvious or dramatic—it could be cows standing too long in holding areas while waiting to be milked; equipment failures that could have been prevented; feed mixed in excess and thrown out; or employees walking back and forth unnecessarily for tools or supplies. On an individual level, these holdups may not seem like much, but they add up over time.

Labor time lost to disorganized processes can significantly cut into farm profitability. Hired labor is the second most expensive input on dairies in New York, after purchased feed costs. If employees can produce more output, add value, and reduce unnecessary expenses with the same or even reduced levels of effort, dairies can cut costs and increase profit.

One practical application of Lean on dairy farms is developing clearly defined, repeatable, standard operating procedures. Think about the milking routine. When everyone follows the same consistent protocol, cows experience less stress, milk letdown improves, and udder health benefits. Variability decreases. Performance becomes more predictable.

Don't underestimate the benefits of starting small. Lean emphasizes continuous improvement, rather than making significant overhauls in procedures. On a dairy, this could mean making changes to the parlor flow to reduce loading time or making supplies more readily available so that employees waste less time looking for them.

And finally, an important principle of Lean is respect for people and their work. You and your team are the ones who know the ins and outs of the processes on your farm. Utilizing the experiential knowledge of those who are most familiar with what it takes to do the work every day are often the ones who have the best ideas for making improvements.

In an industry shaped by tight margins and volatile milk prices, operational discipline can make the difference between surviving and thriving. At the end of the day, Lean is about intentional management. It encourages us to ask regularly: Is this the best way to do this? And if not, what small steps could make it better?

References

<https://cals.cornell.edu/pro-dairy/our-expertise/business/lean-management>

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- Unwanted or unusable pesticides, fertilizers and other chemicals
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Drop off at facilities:

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- ⇒ Lockport - Wednesday, May 6
- ⇒ Spencerport - Thursday, May 7
- ⇒ Waterloo - Friday, May 8

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cleansweep@dec.ny.gov

Phone:

518-225-8146

LEAN FOCUSES ON A CENTRAL QUESTION: DOES THIS ACTIVITY CREATE VALUE?



ARE YOU INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT LEAN MANAGEMENT? CONTACT KATE AT 716-640-0522 OR KEM348@CORNELL.EDU

Periparturient Egg Rise



The periparturient egg rise (PPER) is a well-known phenomenon in small ruminants. It is the reduction in immunity to parasites (worms + coccidia) around the time of lamb/kidding (parturition). It can occur two weeks before parturition up to 8 weeks after. The magnitude can vary by season, breed, individual, and number of offspring. The higher fecal egg counts contribute greatly to the infection of pastures which will be grazed by naïve lambs and kids.

Strategies for managing the PPER

- Selectively deworm ewes/does prior to lambing/kidding.
- Increase protein level of late gestation ration
- Lamb/kid in the winter or fall
- Lamb/kid indoors (zero grazing)
- Feed BioWorma® during the periparturient period
- Raise more resistant breeds
- Select for parasite resistance in your flock/herd.

Deworm the periparturient ewe/doe if . . .

- Her FAMACHA® score is ≥ 4 (3 for goats)
- Her body condition score is ≤ 2
- She has 3 or more offspring (2 for goats)
- She's been through only one grazing season
- She's a high producing dairy animal



It's no longer recommended that all periparturient ewes/does be dewormed. Instead, selective deworming is recommended.



By Susan Schoenian, Sheep & Goat Specialist Emeritus, University of Maryland Extension. ©2025
For more information, go to www.wormx.info.

\$1.7 Million Available for NY Beginning Farmers!

What can be funded?

- Start-up, improvement or expansion of farm operations
- Purchase of land, machinery, equipment, or livestock
- Construction or improvement of structures
- Marketing initiatives
- Worker or apprenticeship training
- Other business needs tied to financial impact

Who is eligible?

NY Beginning farmers with 10 years or less of farm operation experience and who will materially and substantially participate in operating a farm in NYS.

Funding Information

Application Period: 3/16-6/14
Total Funding Available: \$1,700,000
Track 1 Grant Award Range: \$5,000-\$49,999

Track 2 Grant Award Range: \$50,000-\$200,000
Required Match: 5%

Information Sessions

Friday, March 20 12pm-1pm
Thursday, March 26 5pm-6pm
Tuesday, April 7 5:30pm-6:30pm

Learn More

www.nyfvi.org

WEED SEED MOVEMENT SURVEY

Purpose of the survey:

This survey is part of a research effort led by Collins Bugingo, Seed Biologist, and Lynn Sosnoskie, Weed Specialist, at Cornell University. The goal is to better understand how weed seeds move on agricultural equipment and how growers currently think about, manage, and mitigate that risk. Your responses will help inform future research, extension materials, and practical guidance tailored to different production systems and regions. The survey should take approximately 8 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary, and all responses will be kept confidential and reported only in aggregate. There are no right or wrong answers—we are interested in your experience and perspective. You may skip any question you prefer not to answer. Thank you for sharing your time and expertise.



https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4Mlv5Xi2wwe4tTg

USE FAMACHA SCORES (ANEMIA SCORES) AND BODY CONDITION AS TWO MAJOR FACTORS TO DETERMINE WHICH ANIMALS GET DEWORMED.



GOOD BARN MANAGEMENT AND PASTURE ROTATION HELP REDUCE PARASITE RE-INFECTION.

HOW COVER CROPS CHANGE WATER MOVEMENT IN YOUR FIELDS

By John Pirrung, SWNYDLFC Technician

As last year has certainly shown most of us, water is one of the biggest drivers of success or stress in a cropping system. Not only is it difficult to manage something so unpredictable, but sometimes the things you do to keep water in your fields during a drought are the same things that can turn the field into a muddy mess for weeks.

There is no one-size-fits-all water management technique, but there are options that can help you be more prepared for different water-based challenges. Cover crops are one of those options; they influence how water moves into, through, and out of our soils. Understanding how water moves in a cover crop system can help you manage new risks and opportunities, and determine what strategies are right for you.

UNDERSTANDING WATER IN THE FIELD

When rain hits a field, several things can happen. The balance between them determines whether that rainfall becomes stored soil moisture, or a problem that can delay field operations.

Infiltration

- Infiltration is the rate at which water enters the soil surface – when rainfall intensity exceeds the infiltration rate, water will begin to pond and flow across the surface instead of seeping into the ground
- Good infiltration depends on soil structure, surface cover, organic matter, and amount of soil compaction – soils with stable aggregates allow water to infiltrate more effectively

Retention

- Once water infiltrates, the next question is how much stays around where plants can use it – soil organic matter is key here, with higher organic matter content resulting in more water retention potential
- Think of soil organic matter as a sponge – not only does it let your field absorb water, it also helps it keep it long after the rain has stopped

Runoff

- Runoff can occur when rainfall exceeds infiltration, or when soils are fully saturated – runoff doesn't just carry off water, it can wash away soil, nutrients, and pesticides too
- Bare soils are particularly vulnerable to runoff, because there's nothing in the way to slow the water down or protect the surface from heavy raindrops (which can contribute to crusting)

Evaporation / Transpiration

- Water also leaves fields through:
 - Evaporation (from the soil surface) or...
 - Transpiration (through plant leaves)
- Sometimes these processes are lumped together as “evapotranspiration” – bare soil tends to lose water

quickly through direct evaporation, especially in windy or hot conditions

HOW COVER CROPS CHANGE THINGS

Infiltration? Increased

- Cover crop roots create channels for water to flow underground, surface residue protects soil from crusting, and roots support soil microbes that bind soil into stable aggregates
- This all leads to less ponding after rainfall as more water ends up beneath the soil surface
 - University of Minnesota Extension notes that fields with cover crops report dry field conditions much more quickly after a rain event than bare fields

Retention? Increased

- Cover crops add biomass above and below ground that increases soil organic matter over time, especially with long-term repeated use
- By increasing the size of the organic matter “sponge” you can improve your drought resilience

Runoff? Reduced

- Cover crops and their residue slow down water movement across the soil surface and protect against raindrop impacts
 - According to SARE, cover crops reduce sediment loss by an average of 21 tons per acre on conventional-till fields
- This keeps more soil and nutrients where they belong (in your field instead of the nearest creek)

WHAT IF WE GET ANOTHER SUPER WET SPRING? OR THE OPPOSITE?

Last year we saw a particularly wet spring followed by a particularly dry summer, which caused several issues for growers across Upstate New York. Here's some management considerations in case this year ends up mirroring the last, or if it flips the script:

- In a wet spring, cover crops can help remove excess water through transpiration, while also improving soil structure and allowing for better infiltration instead of ponding
 - In this case it would be wise to wait a bit later to terminate the cover crops to allow for extra water removal (this may happen by accident if the fields are too wet to access anyway)
- In a dry spring, cover crops might end up depleting stored water, leaving less for the main crops going into the summer, though the soil structure improvements will still occur
 - In this case an early termination might be helpful, especially if the termination leaves residue that can further prevent evaporation

THE SOIL STRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS OFFERED BY COVER CROPS TAKE TIME TO APPEAR; YOU WON'T BE SEEING RADICAL CHANGES IN YOUR SOIL IN JUST ONE YEAR.



DIFFERENT COVER CROPS REQUIRE DIFFERENT TERMINATION TIMINGS AND METHODS, WITH SOME HAVING TIGHTER WINDOWS THAN OTHERS.



NY Beef Producer's Association Regional Meetings

- In either case, sustained cover crop usage can help you build up enough organic matter to be more resilient in the case of another summer drought, slowing down the rate at which the underground stores of water are depleted
- Consider experimenting with different termination times in different fields, both as a way to compare fields and to hedge your bets in the case of uncertain forecasts
- It also helps to actively monitor your soil moisture and plan based on the actual moisture content of different fields, rather than just relying on calendar dates – naturally, these are only a few of the many things to consider around termination timing and planting schedules

Like any management tool, cover crops need to be utilized carefully and strategically. But, when managed well, they can shift your field's water balance in ways that reduce risk and improve long-term productivity and resilience. In an era of increasingly variable weather, with growers having issues of too much and too little water in the same season, improving the ways our soils handle water may be one of the most practical resilience strategies available.

References

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March 24th - Region 2

CCE Cattaraugus, Ellicottville, NY, 5:30pm

Connect with regional producers and learn about practical, performance-driven cattle nutrition from feed industry experts. Topics include ingredient selection, cost management, herd performance optimization, and navigating today's market challenges.

RSVP to Dr. Katie Card-Allen by March 17th
716-450-4248 (call or text)

April 4th - Region 4

Alfred State College Farm, Alfred Station, NY

NYBPA Region 4 and CCE invite you to join us and network with other regional beef producers while learning practical skills for managing the beef herd. More information coming soon.

RSVP to Lynn Bliven
585-268-7644 or lao3@cornell.edu

Calling all Wool Enthusiasts!

Please join us for a day of workshops and hands-on activities for shepherds, shearers, fiber artists, and interested community members -- learn how to produce quality fleece, process wool at-home, access markets for your wool, help your local shepherds, and strengthen our regional wool supply chain!

Quality Wool Workshop - Saturday, March 21, 2026

Union University Church Center 29 North Main Street, Alfred, NY 14802

Agenda

10 AM to Noon - Optimal fleece begins with quality animal care; NEFX Farmer Certification Training; & Skirting Demonstration
Attending the morning program will allow your farm to sell to the Northeast Fiber Exchange, a natural fiber buying hub supporting the Northeast's textile supply chain.

Noon-1 PM Lunch & Exhibits

Participants will have an opportunity to join us for an artisan lunch. Made from local farm products and by local bakers. Suggested donation \$10 payable at the event.

1-4 PM Breakout Sessions - Participants may choose from multiple topics per hour during the afternoon session. Topics to include Skirting, Animal Nutrition & Forage Analysis, Wool Processing Demonstration, Scouring, Wool Supply Chain, Pasture Management & Soil Health

Presenters

Jessica Waltemyer, Small Ruminant Extension Specialist, Cornell Pro-Livestock Team.
Shannon Zhang, Business Development and Operations Manager, Northeast Fiber Exchange
Emmaline Long, Fiber Farmer, Orchard View Lincoln Longwools
Lynn Bliven, Ag & Natural Resources Issue Leader, Cornell Cooperative Extension Allegany County
Members of the Southern Tier Fiber Arts Guild

Participants are invited to bring 1-2 fleeces from 2025 or 2026 shearing to skirt during the workshop.



Preregistration requested by March 13th. You may sign up for the full day or half day to fit your schedule.



Register online with QR code or visit our website:
<https://allegany.cce.cornell.edu>

Phone Registration:
Lynn Bliven
(585) 268-7644 Ext. 18

Hosted by Cornell Cooperative Extension Allegany County in collaboration with Allegany Fresh Transport, Northeast Fiber Exchange (NEFX), Southern Tier Fiber Arts Guild, and Crooked Lane Farm.

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Allegany County



MAKE SURE YOU PLAN AHEAD TO FIGURE OUT THE BEST TERMINATION METHOD FOR THE COVER CROPS YOU USE - MECHANICAL, CHEMICAL, ETC.



DIFFERENT COVER CROP SPECIES CHANGE SOIL IN DIFFERENT WAYS – EX. DIFFERENT ROOT STRUCTURES (FIBROUS VS TAPROOT) WILL PROVIDE DIFFERENT AMOUNTS OF AGGREGATION OR INFILTRATION.



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