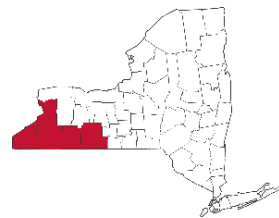




COWS CROPS & CRITTERS



A partnership between Cornell University & the
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Cornell Cooperative Extension | Southwest New York Dairy, Livestock & Field Crops Program



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Photo by: Kelly Torrey

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Last month, I tuned into a webinar hosted by the Cornell Cooperative Extension Agritourism Program Work Team. They featured Stacey Stearns, a Communications Specialist with UConn Extension who also helps operate her family's dairy agritourism business. Stacey's objectives for the webinar were to help farmers determine whether agritourism is a good fit for their farm and, if so, to highlight ways to add or enhance agritourism opportunities on their operation.

The webinar began by highlighting several large dairy farms that may come to mind when we think about agritourism. The four case study farms featured were Fair Oaks (Indiana), Kreider Farms (Pennsylvania), Hansen's Dairy (Iowa), and Hillcrest Dairy Farm (Georgia). For those unfamiliar with the farms, I will share a few of the activities each offers. Fair Oaks has a Birthing Barn with stadium seating where visitors can watch calves being born. It also has a 2D Movie Theater that rotates through a variety of videos about the farm. Kreider Farms offers guided driving tours on a branded bus that takes visitors through the farm and concludes with a climb up a silo observation tower, where guests can enjoy beautiful views while sipping farm-fresh milk. Hansen's Dairy emphasizes creating "a true Iowa farm-to-table experience," allowing visitors to bottle-feed a calf and milk a cow. Last but not least, Hillcrest Dairy takes pride in being Georgia's first robotic dairy farm and educates the public about sustainability and robotic milking practices. If these farms are your only examples of dairy agritourism, you might feel overwhelmed and conclude this type of agritourism could never work on your farm. You may even be right! However, not all agritourism operations have to look the same. Stacey then introduced four additional case study farms that offer much smaller-scale experiences while still providing meaningful value to consumers.

The first case study was Liberty Hill Farm in Vermont (LibertyHillFarm.com). They milk 115 cows and market themselves as a farm-stay destination. The farm features an inn with 7 bedrooms and 4 bathrooms, where guests are invited to stay and assist with what the farm describes as "family-friendly chores on the farm." Now, I know what some of you may be thinking. As someone who grew up in Los Angeles, California, I can assure you that, yes, people will pay money to do things that many of us simply view as chores on the farm.

The next farm highlighted was Thorncrest Farm in Connecticut (MilkHouseChocolates.net). Their main attraction is fresh chocolates and creamline milk produced from the cows on their farm. To enhance the visitor experience, the cows are housed in a stable from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Thursday through Sunday, allowing guests to meet the named cows who helped produce the delicacies they are purchasing and enjoying.

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Guardians Farm in Connecticut (GuardiansFarmDairy.com) was the third case study featured and is Connecticut's only veteran-owned dairy farm. In addition to offering creamline milk delivery and a farm store, which are more traditional forms of dairy diversification, Guardians Farm has distinguished itself by offering calf-cuddling sessions. The owner has also combined his passion for photography with the farm experience by offering farm portrait sessions.

The final case study covered was Stacey Stearns' family farm, Mountain Dairy in Connecticut (MountainDairy.com). Stacey shared that they recently opened an on-farm creamery and incorporated educational exhibits about milk and dairy cows throughout the facilities to help educate consumers. She also noted that they added "Instagrammable" photo opportunities, including a giant ice cream cone created by a local artist, to attract more visitors and encourage social media engagement.

Continued on next page...

WELCOME TO MOO YORK:



AGRITOURISM ON DAIRY FARMS

Graphic credit: Katie Callero

DAIRY AGRITOURISM ISN'T A ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL APPROACH.



VISITORS ARE BUYING MEMORIES, EXPERIENCES, CONNECTIONS, AND STORIES.

These are just a few examples of real farms that have successfully made agritourism work for their operations. Stacey shared a slide highlighting a wide range of opportunities, including:

- Educational experiences: school tours, homeschool groups, on-demand tours, interactive exhibits
- Entertainment experiences: hayrides, festivals, family events, seasonal celebrations, calf days
- Food experiences: dairy tastings, ice cream, breakfast on the farm, cheese events
- Overnight experiences: farm stays, camping, RV sites, glamping

Despite the variety of opportunities she covered, Stacey emphasized that what visitors are really buying are memories, experiences, connections, and stories. Agritourism on your farm does not have to be elaborate or expensive, but it does have to work for you. She concluded the webinar by sharing a four-step action plan for anyone interested in exploring agritourism:

1. What assets do we already have?
2. What type of offerings are we comfortable with?
3. Who is our target visitor?
4. What can we launch in 12 months?

Dairy agritourism isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. The right path is the one that aligns with your farm's strengths, comfort level, and long-term vision.

Corn Silage Harvest: Quick Thoughts

By Katelyn Miller, Field Crop and Forage Specialist, SWNYDLFC

Based on the three-month outlook from the Northeast Regional Climate Center, there is a 33-40% chance of below normal precipitation and above normal temperatures from September – November. We will see if this prediction holds true, but I know many of you are hoping for some more heat to finish out your crops following some late planting dates. Knowing silage harvest has started, here are some quick thoughts:

- Prediction models such as Climate Smart Farming's Growing Degree Tool can be a useful tool for helping indicate harvest timing but should not be used alone. Visualizing crop stage and testing dry matter of your crop is important, as research shows weather patterns and crop health can cause differing maturity between the plant and kernel. Basing harvest decisions on indicators such as firing up of leaves can be a misleading indicator.
- Tons per acre out of the field and tons of good feed reaching the cow are not equal. This table shows the adjustment of a 4 percent unit change in shrink and how it equates to nutrition for the cow. These results have remained consistent, even for the same set of hybrids planted on the same date but harvested a week apart.
- After managing yields and the quality you want, storage presents one of the biggest opportunities and challenges. In addition to harvesting at the right dry matter, ensiling properly to avoid excessive shrink is crucial. Pack well to achieve a high density and consider using bacterial inoculants.

Goal: Dry Matter Nutrients for Cows

Tons of good feed reaching the cow
is not the same as **tons/acre.**

Yield, tons/acre	DM %	Shrink,%	tons DM for cows	Starch, %	Starch, lbs/acre
21	30	14	5.42	30	3,250
18	35	14	5.42	35	3,793
Difference			-		+ 543
Yield, tons/acre	DM %	Shrink,%	tons DM for cows	Starch, %	Starch, lbs/acre
21	30	18	5.16	30	3,096
18	35	14	5.42	35	3,793
Difference			+0.26		+ 697



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IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT DRY MATTER OR BUNK MANAGEMENT, CONTACT KATELYN MILLER.

FOR A FULL LISTING OF OUR TEAM'S AND LOCAL COUNTIES' CONTACT INFORMATION SEE INSIDE COVER PAGE.

Dairy Feeder School

 **October 29th**  **10 AM to 3:30 PM**

Check-In Starts at 9:30 AM



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\$50 Lunch Provided

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Come join us for a one day on-farm training for dairy farm feeders with hands-on activities and demos!

Who Should Attend:

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- Interested in becoming a cow feeder and want to increase knowledge of cow feeding
- Interested in learning more about how to improve the feeding process on farm



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By Amy Barkley, Livestock Specialist, SWNYDLFC Team

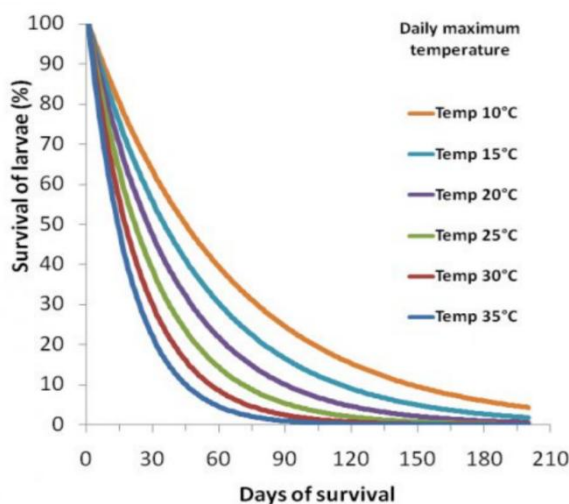
Rotationally grazing sheep and goats has clearly documented benefits. Improved forage availability, better nutrition management, improved immune health, and management of parasites by removing animals from their infected feces and problem pastures during high-risk periods are all ways that this system works for the producer. On the other hand, continuous pasture systems with limited acreage result in severe parasite challenges for our small ruminants. It's not uncommon to hear of losses of 10%–25% in herds and flocks that are not systematically rotating animals on pasture.

From a forage perspective, pastures should be rotated when the average forage height is grazed down to 4 inches. Once the forage regrows to about 8–10 inches, animals can be let back on to graze. This grazing height recommendation not only keeps plants from being set back too far before their rest period but also lines up with recommendations for parasite control — most small ruminant internal parasites reside only in the lower 2 inches of forage because of their sensitivity to drying out.

The other thing to remember is that in the spring and fall, forages in primarily cool season pastures need about 3 weeks to regrow. In the summer, the heat and relative lack of moisture extend that regrowth period to 45 days. When thinking about forage availability alone, these rules are generally sufficient when considering re-grazing schedules. However, for parasite control, they are not. The American Consortium for Small Ruminant Parasite Control recommends a practical rest period of 45–60 days for pastures following the movement of small ruminants, with 60–105 days being the gold standard.

Figure 1 shows the survival of barber pole worm larvae on pasture (for reference, 20°C is equivalent to 68°F). This chart indicates that waiting 45 days produces a 55%–90% reduction in infective larvae without a host present, depending on temperature, while waiting 60 days gives a 60%–95% reduction. Waiting the full 105 days gives a reduction of 70%–100%. Cooler temperatures allow the parasites to persist longer than warmer temperatures do, which means the fallow period should be longer during cooler weather. This illustrates that pasture management for internal parasite control often conflicts with what's recommended for pasture rotation from the plant's perspective alone. This can be frustrating for small ruminant producers, since it can mean pasture gets ahead of them. To combat this, some producers opt to hay a portion of their land in the spring and graze it following that first cutting to capture as much forage as possible while staying ahead of plant maturity. Others may clip the pastures to discourage weedy plants from seeding and encouraging regrowth of desirable species.

Figure 1: Survival of barber pole worm infective larvae on pasture at various daily maximum temperatures and 60% relative humidity.



DESIGNING THE SYSTEM: WHAT DOES IT COST?

Given the challenges small ruminant grazing systems face, it's worth taking a moment to consider the cost of designing and implementing a pasture system flexible enough to allow both frequent movements and long rest periods. To do this, let's design a grazing system around a group of 25 mature animals, which is a typically sized herd or flock in southwestern New York.

There are several ways to develop a grazing system, and each one depends heavily on the number and weight of animals, lambing/kidding timing, forage type and availability, and anticipated grazing days in a calendar year. We won't dive that deep into grazing plan development in this article; instead, we'll focus on estimating the cost of installing a rotational pasture system.

Continued on next page...

GRAZING PRINCIPLES FOR FORAGE ALONE CONFLICT SOMEWHAT WITH GRAZING FOR PARASITE MANAGEMENT.



PASTURES GROW FASTER IN THE SPRING AND FALL THAN IN THE SUMMER.

In a setting where pastures are actively managed, rotated, and consistently produce high-quality forage, the rule of thumb is that you can stock 5 animals per acre. This applies to mature animals or dams with youngstock by side. Once youngstock start grazing on their own, they'll need their own acreage. This is an ideal scenario, so doubling that acreage requirement for this example allows for some flexibility to give them more pasture if needed.

Perimeter Fencing: If you have sheep or goats, you likely already have perimeter fencing in place. But if you're installing new fence, woven wire runs \$2.33–\$4.23/linear foot, while 5–6 strand high tensile runs \$1.92–\$2.85/linear foot. These figures were calculated from various extension articles pricing farm fence installations from 2024–2026. For 25 animals on 10 acres laid out as a perfect square, that equates to 2,640 feet of perimeter fence. When penciled out, 10 acres of perimeter fencing costs between \$5,068 and \$11,167.

Interior/paddock fencing: You can subdivide a grazing area into paddocks with permanent fencing, but this is expensive and far less flexible than temporary fencing. Sheep and goats don't respect a single-strand electric divider the way cattle do, so electric netting with a minimum height of 35" is preferred for these species. This fencing costs about \$150–\$175 per 164-foot roll. A square quarter-acre paddock requires 418 linear feet, or 3 rolls of fencing.

Energizers: Fence energizers are an additional cost, ranging from \$200–\$400. Plug-in energizers sit at the lower end of that range compared to solar chargers, which are generally more expensive. Solar energizers are typically used for stand-alone interior fence squares, while plug-in energizers are used to electrify high-tensile perimeter fence, which you can use to provide power to the interior fences. An energizer of at least 2 joules is necessary to run electric net fence, since it carries higher impedance than high-tensile fence due to its net structure and regular contact with weeds and grasses.

Watering systems: These are crucial for grazing success, and their design and cost depend heavily on how often you move animals and how many you have. A sheep or goat drinks 1–3 gallons of water daily, depending on weather and forage moisture. When budgeting costs, account for either the time it takes to haul water out to animals if using a portable system or the cost of installing a more permanent watering system.

Mineral Feeders: If offering minerals in the pasture, covered mineral feeders are recommended if you're feeding loose minerals. This keeps them protected from the elements. A feeder like this runs about \$250–\$300. Mineral blocks are generally left out in the elements but would also benefit from a covered feeder.

Figure 2: Electric net fencing is a popular choice for sub-dividing sheep and goat pastures to successfully keep the animals in and predators out.



Photo credit: Premier1Supplies

Labor: Beyond fencing, watering systems, and mineral feeders, a major cost of a rotational grazing system is labor. There's a real tradeoff here between upfront capital cost and ongoing labor. Permanent, pre-subdivided pastures don't require regularly moving temporary fence, but they cost more to install and offer less flexibility in paddock size. Moving animals from one permanent paddock to another takes about 15 minutes. From experience working with farmers, in a system using temporary fencing, moving three sections of temporary fence plus the animals takes about an hour to an hour and a half.

For a quarter-acre paddock with 4" of moderate-density cool season forage, the NRCS grazing stick indicates enough forage to support 25 animals for about 5 days. In spring and fall, that may stretch to 7 days. To manage parasites effectively, moving animals at least once weekly helps reduce their consumption of infective larvae. The gold standard is moving animals every 1–3 days, since barber pole worm and brown stomach worm eggs can hatch and become infective in as little as 3 days under ideal conditions.

If you are bringing animals back to the barn at night for feeding and protection, this adds time to your day. For many farms, this extra movement takes an additional 30–45 minutes of care daily.

Continued on next page...

PERMANENT FENCING AROUND
PASTURES IS A MUST TO KEEP
ANIMALS SAFELY CONTAINED...



...TEMPORARY ELECTRIC FENCES ARE
NOT ESCAPE-PROOF.

WHERE'S THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT?

With all of these costs outlined, you may be thinking, "Why would I invest that much money in a rotational grazing system, and what's my return?" Beyond the reduced labor of cleaning out the barn and feeding animals indoors, properly managed rotationally grazed pastures provide excellent nutrition that improves immune function to help animals fight off parasite burdens, resulting in improved weight gain, healthier pregnancies, and better weaning weights.

Where the rubber meets the road on ROI is reduced mortality from heavy worm burdens, particularly barber pole worm, which can kill lambs within 5 days of reaching a critical population in the body. You'll still need to regularly FAMACHA score animals and deworm as needed, but reducing overall parasite loads means fewer animals become critically ill faster than you can identify and treat them. Values for sheep and goats range from \$150–\$400 per animal for commercial sales, and up to \$500–\$1,000 for high-end breeding or show stock. Losing one or two animals is something most operations can absorb and is expected, even under the best conditions. Losing multiple animals is not and can be the deciding factor between profit and loss for the year.

So, while managing a rotational grazing system is more financially and labor intensive than continuous grazing, it typically pays for itself. What you may notice this article doesn't share is the exact cost-benefit analysis for your operation, and that's by design! Each system is going to be different, and using the numbers and considerations shared above can give you an idea of what it may cost to implement a rotational grazing system. If you're thinking about designing a system like this and want personalized assistance, reach out to your local Extension office or regional team; we're here to help!

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.

Resources:

- American Consortium for Small Ruminant Parasite Control. <https://www.wormx.info/>
- Bilderback, D. (2024). University of Tennessee. Fencing Budget Calculator: <https://arec.tennessee.edu/fencing-budgets-calculator/>
- Drollette, R. (2024) Iowa State University. Ag Decision Maker: Estimated Costs of Livestock Fencing. <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/livestock/html/b1-75.html>
- Kientzt, D. and Milhollin, R. (2026) University of Missouri Extension. Pasture Fence Construction Budget. <https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/g1193>
- Wormboss.com (2022). Larval Survival of Barber's Pole Worm. <https://wormboss.com.au/tests-tools/grazing-management-sheep/larval-survival-of-barbers-pole-worm/>

Disaster Reporting for September 2nd, 2026

Our region experienced significant severe weather resulting from a powerful series of storms that went through on September 2nd.

We hope that everyone made it through this event safely. For those looking for disaster recovery and flooding resources, you can find more information by calling your local extension agent. Additionally, our team is part of a network that reports storm damage on farms to the NYS Department of Ag and Markets to determine the severity of the disaster and determine which resources to deploy, including state and federal assistance. Any damage sustained by agricultural lands, crops, livestock operations, buildings, or other agricultural facilities can be reported to our team.

Contact any one of our team members to report damage or self-report the damage using this link:
<https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/8c5bf33f24c8432e9d6550dabb18c207>.

We will need the following information:

- Name
- Farm address
- Disaster type
- What weather affected your operation (rain, flood, hail, severe wind)
- What crops or structures were damaged
- Estimate of overall damage to your location, in dollars
- Estimated loss of revenue
- If insurance will cover losses or not
- If you've reported this damage to FSA already
- Photos of videos of the damage, if you have them

For more resources on disaster recovery, you can visit the following websites:

Disaster Recovery Resources: <https://eden.cce.cornell.edu/preparedness-recovery/>

Flooding Resources: <https://eden.cce.cornell.edu/natural-hazards/flooding/>

NEED HELP DEVELOPING A GRAZING
PLAN?
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<https://tinyurl.com/TractorSafetyWorkshop>.

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You may remember back in May I wrote an article discussing how last winter might impact insect pressure for this growing season. I highlighted some common pests we see like black cutworm, armyworm, and alfalfa weevil, but there were a few that didn't make the cut; the most critical for this summer being Western Corn Rootworm. Quite frankly, this is a pest that has not been on my radar much, only having received a few reports of damage since I joined the team. This summer, however, it's had a significant impact statewide, leaving us with many questions about the future efficacy of our current management options.

Based on grower reports out of Central NY, 22 fields and over 2,000 acres have been impacted over 4 counties by root injury and goosenecking. The southern tier is not immune from CRW pressure, as scouting efforts show pest presence here as well. So, how serious is this pest and what's the end result?"

Western Corn Rootworm is a major pest of corn, with an estimated \$2 billion in economic losses nationwide, derived from yield reductions and associated management costs. The primary cause of concern comes from larval feeding damage on roots, which weakens plants, causing lodging, or "goosenecking". While this lodging can create harvest challenges, the primary issue lies in yield loss from stunted plants and reduced ear size. During late summer, adult's lay eggs in the soil, which then overwinter and hatch the next spring. The adults emerge from the soil around pollination at which time they will feed on the pollen and corn silks, resulting in the clipped appearance. Outside of the yield losses that occur from root feeding damage, if silk clipping happens before the corn pollinates, you will see a reduction in kernel set.

One of the most effective strategies that can be used to manage this pest is crop rotation. Consecutively planting corn year after year greatly increases your risk for damage. Rotating out of corn will allow most of the existing population to flush out of the soil, as corn is the only host for CRW. To work around this, a strategy used has been the use of Bt toxins. The first toxin Cry3Bb1 was introduced in 2003, and by 2010, multi-trait pyramids were used for rootworm control, with Cry3Bb1 in SmartStax along with Cry34/35Ab1. Unfortunately, along this same time frame, entomologists in the Midwest started uncovering issues with the original Cry3Bb1 trait, discovering better survivability of larvae in fields planted to corn with this trait, showing strong evidence of field evolved resistance in the Midwest. This concern has shown the importance of rotating the toxin type used to a different mode of action when planting corn consecutively.

While this situation has been ongoing in the Midwest for some time, there is still plenty of potential here for resistance to develop. As I mentioned, pockets in NYS this summer have experienced significant CRW pressure, with some fields having 5 beetles per plant (threshold is 1 beetle/plant). Though large beetle populations do not necessarily equate resistance, it can be an indicator of a larger issue. The population intensity that we have been finding in the state indicates that trait failure may be on our doorstep. Detecting these issues is crucial, but in the face of pest pressure, it should be our goal to preserve the efficacy of these traits before further issues have the chance to develop.

An additional management tool that has shown promise is the use of entomopathogenic nematodes (EPNs), which was first developed to control alfalfa snout beetles in Northern NY, but has also shown the ability to control other soil dwelling pests such as CRW. Research conducted over 7 years has indicated that when traits prove to not be effective, the presence of EPNs reduce the damage below economic levels.

Tables from "Biological Control of Corn Rootworm with Native NY Entomopathogenic Nematodes", Elson Shields, The Manager, March 2021. Tables are shown on the next page, page 11.

The CRW outbreak this summer has left us with many questions surrounding our future technology availability for this pest. While there are no effective or economic management options for this time of year, remain vigilant for lodging while harvesting corn this fall. Many seed reps are required to investigate and report any damage or concerns related to CRW failure, so be sure to notify them.

Resources:

- <https://extension.psu.edu/managing-western-corn-rootworm-resistance-to-bt-on-the-fringe>
- Sequential evolution of resistance by western corn rootworm to multiple *Bacillus thuringiensis* traits in transgenic maize (<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11929453/>)
- The Handy Bt Trait Table for U.S. Corn Production - https://www.texasinsects.org/uploads/4/9/3/0/49304017/bttraittable_aug2025.pdf
- <https://blogs.cornell.edu/whatscoppingup/2026/09/01/2026-corn-rootworm-field-observations-in-central-new-york/>

THERE IS AN ESTIMATED \$2 BILLION IN ECONOMIC LOSSES EACH YEAR BECAUSE OF THIS PEST.



WHILE HARVESTING CORN, BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR 'GOOSENECKING' OF STALKS, WHICH IS AN INDICATOR OF CRW FEEDING DAMAGE.

TABLE 1

Corn rootworm damage in the presence and absence of EPNs in non Bt-RW trait corn. CRW damage was rated using the Iowa 0-3 scale.

Year	No EPNs	EPNs	EPNs Damage Reduction
2016	1.85		
2017 & 2018	No significant CRW pressure		
2019	0.5	0.25	50%
Droughty soil (within emergence cages)	2.1	1.6	24%
2020	0.6	0.1	86%
Drier soil (within emergence cages)	0.7	0.1	86%

TABLE 2

Corn rootworm damage in the presence and absence of EPNs in failing Bt-RW trait corn. CRW damage rated using the Iowa 0-3 scale.

Year	No EPNs	EPNs	EPNs Damage Reduction
2016	0.2	0.2	89%
2017	No significant CRW pressure		
2018	0.7	0.1	86%
2019	1.1	0.2	82%
Droughty soil (within emergence cages)	1.9	0.7	63%
2020	0.8	0.2	75%
Drier soil (within emergence cages)	1.4	0.3	79%



Aerial photograph of Western Corn Rootworm damage, Tully (Onondaga Co.), 2026 season.

Photo credit: Ben Rogers, Pioneer



Western Corn Rootworm adult female on corn silks.

Photo credit: Katelyn Miller



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