

Secretary's Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture

June 27, 2018

FSMA On-Farm Readiness Reviews/Third-Party Audit – Marketing and Development is underway with its first round of FSMA On-Farm Readiness Reviews for produce growers affected by the Produce Safety Rule. So far, 60 growers (and counting) have volunteered for these fully confidential no cost walk-throughs that include food safety personnel from the Department and Rutgers. The purpose is to prepare participating growers for FSMA compliance when formal inspections begin over the next three years. Any grower interested in participating can contact the Marketing and Development office. Also, the USDA announced last week that it is harmonizing its Third-Party Audit program with FSMA, thereby assuring that growers who are compliant during their Third-Party Audit are also FSMA compliant. The Department, working in consultation with Rutgers, has conducted Third-Party Audits for more than 10 years as part of a cooperative agreement with the USDA.

Blueberry Pollination – Thirty New Jersey blueberry growers have been approved for this year's Canadian Blueberry Fruit Certification Program (BCP). BCP is designed to facilitate the export of fresh blueberry fruit into Canada while protecting against the introduction of blueberry maggot; *Rhagoletis mendax* – a native pest to northeastern United States. Nursery Inspection Program staff members have trained all New Jersey participants in this year's BCP on the protocols and grower-responsibilities so they comply with CFIA regulations. There is one grower that is new to the program this year. Movement certification labels are being issued to participating growers and shipments to Canadian fresh fruit markets are anticipated to begin around the second or third week of June.

National FFA Officer Candidate – Renee Stillwell, of the Allentown FFA Chapter, was selected to serve as New Jersey FFA's National Officer Candidate for 2018. She participated in a practice National Officer Candidate Selection Process held on June 14 along with the candidates from Connecticut and New Hampshire. A six-member committee interviewed the candidates using the officer competencies and the National FFA selection process. They wrote two essays and completed a one-on-one interview, did an advocacy stand and deliver practicum, had two round robin conversations, a media interview, a facilitation practicum and two personal interviews. Renee will continue to go through intensive training this summer and will prepare for the National process conducted in October.

Summer Food Service Program – Program Operations trainings were held on June 5 and June 7 at the Food and Nutrition office in Trenton. All sponsor applications were approved and entered in the data base. The sponsor bid opening process concluded June 26. The Food and Nutrition Unit participated in sponsor kickoff events June 15 at the City of East Orange and June 21 at the South Jersey Food Bank. On June 29, the SFSP's kickoff event will be held at Bridgeton Board of Education with Secretary Fisher. Also, the Unit continues to collaborate with the New Jersey State Rural Development office and FNS/MARO regarding HUD/Rural Development sites.

Live Bird Marketing System – During the month of May, animal health technicians (AHTs) conducted unannounced inspections at 37 registered NJ live bird markets and sampled 19 markets for avian influenza by sampling poultry. Additional activity during the month of May included:

- The quarterly closure of six live bird markets. Quarterly closures consist of cleaning and disinfecting the entire market followed by a minimum 24 hours of "down-time". Following the "down-time", environmental samples are taken at the market for testing.
- The inspection of three poultry distributors. Records were reviewed as well as insuring compliance with 2:9-4.2(c), reviewing vehicle cleaning and disinfection logbooks.
- Avian Influenza testing of 46 backyard flocks throughout New Jersey.

Conservation Education Awards Ceremony – The Conservation Education Awards Ceremony was held on May 21, 2018 and recognized 11 winners for the 2018 Conservation Education Poster Contest and the winners of the 2018 New Jersey Envirothon. The theme of the Poster Contest was “Watersheds - Our Water, Our Home”. Winners were selected in grade categories 2-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12. Winners received awards and recognition at the Ceremony that was held at the State Museum Auditorium and were also invited to participate in a Planetarium Show in Trenton. The awards Ceremony is sponsored by the New Jersey Conservation Partnership which consists of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, NJ Association of Conservation Districts, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

Beekeeping Class – The Apiarist and Plant Laboratory staff taught two intermediate beekeeping classes at PHEAL. The classes lasted two days each and consisted of morning lectures and practical applications of lessons in the apiary on the PHEAL grounds. There were 35 total students. On the first day, they learned how to think like a beekeeper, graft queens, make splits and Nucs and how to minimize swarming. On day two, lessons focused on Varroa mite controls and strategies, how and when to feed colonies and how to work with wax. One of the highlights of the classes was checking the queen cell builder colony to see if the cells the students grafted were accepted. The review sheets were very positive as were the student comments and pictures on social media.

Vectorborne Disease Working Group Meeting – Department of Animal Health staff attended the VBDWG meeting on 5/30/18, which was attended by several agencies. There was a long discussion about the Longhorned tick and what is being done. There was also a discussion on creating a plan for the state on tick response, similar to the one in New York. The tick-borne subcommittee will be meeting to begin the formulation of recommendations that could be provided if funding were to come available to institute a more robust program.

School Nutrition Program – Direct Certification (DC) is the process of identifying, via electronic matching, school age children who are members of households receiving assistance under NJ-SNAP, (Food Stamps), TANF, (Temporary Assistance) or Foster Care programs, to certify them as eligible for free meal benefits in the school nutrition programs. This matching process is done in the School Nutrition Electronic and Reimbursement System, (SNEARS). The link to perform DC for the 2018-2019 School Year will be available beginning July 15, 2018. A webinar was conducted on June 19 to provide training and guidance on the requirements of the DC process.

Marketing Activities – The month of June was highlighted by agricultural economic development and marketing. Jersey Fresh program staff participated in the Allegiance Retail Services Food Show to promote Jersey Fresh agricultural products to supermarket retailers supplied by Allegiance (principally FoodTown in New Jersey). Staff promoted Jersey Fresh to the wholesale and retail produce industry via the distribution of Jersey Fresh point of sale materials to area retailers, wholesalers and farm marketers. The Jersey Fresh Availability & Forecast Report continues to be produced and disseminated via an emailing list.