

Secretary's Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
August 22, 2018

Jersey Fresh Availability Report – The seasonal "Jersey Fresh Availability & Forecast Report" continues to update the region's produce industry, Cooperative Extension staff, Department personnel, restaurateurs, Jersey Fresh licensed growers, and food media communicators on the current and future availability of Jersey Fresh produce. The New Jersey Agricultural Statistics Service also disseminates this information in a weekly report. The report indicates the general quality and quantity of produce available. This information can help buyers with their purchasing and marketing decisions as they relate to Jersey products since retailers typically design their store circulars and marketing strategies three to four weeks in advance. By making the advance availability of farm products known to buyers, the Department can make a bottom line difference in farm agribusiness profitability and sustainability. The Department also helps retailers to provide the best quality and value that Jersey Fresh can offer to their customers.

Agriculture Teacher Vacancies Filled – All known ag teacher vacancies have been filled with Alternate Route Teachers. Alternate Route teachers have not attended a teacher preparation program and often come to teaching from industry positions. They have received a Certificate of Eligibility from NJDOE and will be required to take Education classes before they receive the Standard (teaching) Certificate. Nine veteran teachers' years of service range from 25-41 years and could be eligible for retirement. There will be an additional six teachers eligible for retirement over the next five years. There is concern about any of the 15 teachers retiring before a supply of certified teachers is available since we do not have a teacher preparation program serving the agricultural education profession.

School Nutrition Program – SNP representatives are working on updating and creating trainings. The annual Back to School Memo was released in mid-August welcoming participating districts to a new year, and providing highlights of upcoming deadlines and regulatory changes. There were Determining Officials, Procurement and Independent Review webinars held earlier this month. A Determining Officials training is being held today, August 22nd. The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program training for new schools participating in the program will be held on August 29, with additional trainings in September.

Blueberry Leaf Samples – A total of 1,300 samples of blueberry leaf tissue were taken from blueberry plant growers in New Jersey for this season's Blueberry Scorch Program. To date, the lab has processed over 1,000 of these samples with one positive to report. The positive is currently being retested for further confirmation.

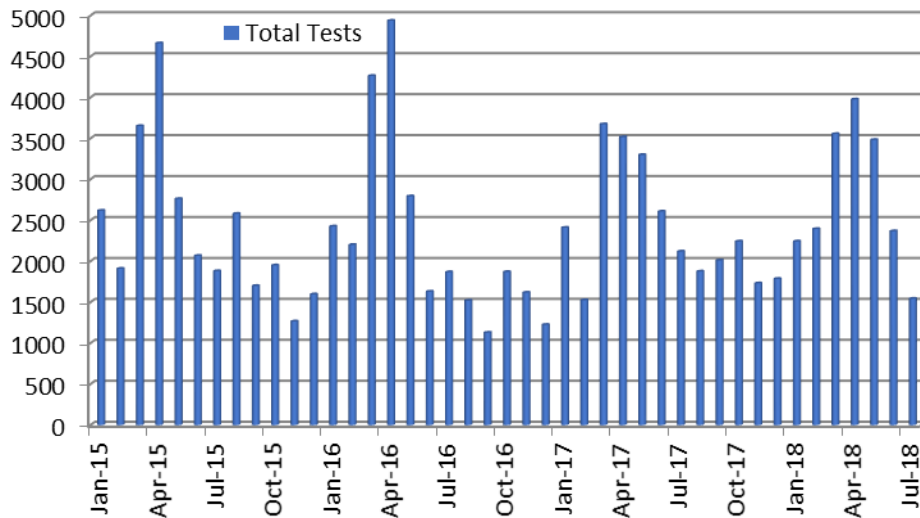
Live Bird Marketing – During the month of July, animal health technicians (AHTs) conducted unannounced inspections at 18 registered NJ live bird markets and sampled nine markets for avian influenza by sampling poultry. Additional activity during the month of July included:

- The quarterly closure of 19 live bird markets. Quarterly closures consist of cleaning and disinfecting the entire market followed by a minimum 24 hours of "downtime". Following the "downtime", environmental samples are taken at the market for testing;
- The inspection of five poultry distributors. Records were reviewed as well as ensuring compliance with 2:9-4.2(c), reviewing vehicle cleaning and disinfection logbooks; avian influenza testing of five poultry distributors;
- During live bird market and distributor inspections, annual biosecurity protocols were reviewed with each owner/manager. Best management practices were discussed as well as any updates that the market may have put in place since last year.

- Avian Influenza testing of 27 backyard flocks through the state of New Jersey.

Apple Marketing Efforts – Marketing staff coordinated the Fall and promotional efforts of the New Jersey Apple Industry Advisory Council by developing promotional and social media stories that will be posted on the Department’s social media platforms to garner favorable exposure for New Jersey apple growers during the Fall harvest season. Staff distributed the current “Where to Find NJ Apples” consumer brochure to New Jersey Travel & Tourism Welcome Centers and county offices of Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

Animal Health Diagnostic Lab – The Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory (AHDL) performed a total of 1543 tests in July 2018. For comparison, historical test numbers are plotted on graph below.



Soil Erosion and Sediment Control – Heavy rainfall in various parts of the state have put great pressure on development projects to control storm water runoff and associated soil erosion during construction. Development sites subject to regulation under the NJ Soil Erosion and Sediment Control regulations must employ various temporary measures to control and limit offsite discharge of sediment while the site is under construction and soils are exposed. Normally these measures are intended to manage small, frequent storm events since most sites are exposed for a relatively short amount of time. Longer exposure often requires stabilization with a temporary cover of vegetation. Since early spring however, New Jersey has experienced several heavy rainfall events in various parts of the state that have overwhelmed normal control measures. Soil Conservation Districts are working closely with contractors and developers to mitigate against excess runoff and erosion to ensure that sites are in compliance with regulations.

Courtesy, Respect, Professionalism Training – The Division of Food and Nutrition offered training to all Division staff on Courtesy, Respect and Professionalism on August 8th, 14th and 16th through Civil Service. Division staff are benefiting from this great training opportunity. Also, Michele Sazo, the USDA Regional Director of Civil Rights, provided a training on Civil Rights during a staff meeting on August 16th.

USDA Honey Bee Survey – The apiarist collected samples from the last apiary participating on the 2017 – 2018 USDA APHIS Honey Bee Survey. The survey determines the presence of various diseases and parasites in the nation’s Honey bee industry. New Jersey is one of about 30 states participating in this year’s survey. Twenty-four apiaries were sampled from the state. Eight colonies were sampled from each apiary. Live bees, bees in alcohol, and comb knock residue were collected and submitted to the USDA bee lab in Beltsville, Md., for analysis. The analysis will determine if any viruses are present.