

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

**October 23, 2024**

**Summer EBT** – October began with the USDA approval of New Jersey's FY 2025 Summer EBT Interim Plan for Operations and Management (iPOM). We anticipate FY25 administrative funding to be released shortly. The Summer EBT Unit has been providing guidance and assisting School Food Authorities with their final Summer EBT file uploads that contained address changes and/or any newly eligible students as of August 31, 2024. The final deadline for SFAs to upload this information to NJDA was Friday, October 4, 2024. The Summer EBT and NJDA-IT Units are still processing data for duplication, due to the reopening of the Summer EBT portal.

**USDA Live Bird Market Continuing Education Training** – A Division of Animal Health Animal Health Technician (AHT) attended the USDA Live Bird Market Continuing Education Training held at the University of California Davis School of Veterinary Medicine. The first day of training included lectures regarding avian influenza (AI) programs, live bird market surveillance, records auditing, respiratory diseases of poultry, and response issues regarding the 2022 HPAI outbreak. Day two of the training was a field trip to live bird markets in San Francisco and Oakland. The AHT was able to view how live bird markets operate in other states and the specific state regulations that pertain to them. Biosecurity and emergency scenarios were also discussed. The final day of the training included a mix of lectures and a wet lab. During the wet lab, the attendee was able to get practical experience handling birds, collecting samples, euthanasia, and how to perform a necropsy on various poultry types. Lectures discussed the producer's perspectives during the 2022 HPAI outbreak, pathology of Virulent Newcastle Disease (vND), NVSL updates on AI, and cultural and religious awareness. The day ended with a scenario exercise that sharpened the participants' communication skills.

**Fall Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources (FANR) Education Professional Development Conference** – The 2024 Fall Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) Education Professional Development Conference "Cultivating Skills for the Future: Integrating Work-Based Learning in Agricultural Education" welcomed more than 30 teachers and guests at the EcoComplex in Bordentown on September 27. The conference was emceed by the New Jersey Association of Agricultural Educators (NJAAE) President and Ag Teacher at Woodstown High School Deanna Miller. Participants engaged in a full day of workshops all centered around Work-Based Learning. Attendees participated in a panel discussion on the wants and needs of the future workforce, heard updates from Erin Noble (Office of FANRE/FFA), and engaged in Supervised Agricultural Experience for all breakout sessions. The NJAAE kicked off this year's book club that will discuss the book "Balance Like a Pirate." Each conference participant received a copy of the book.

**Jersey Fresh** – Marketing and Development Division staff launched the Apple Council Fall social campaign and trivia contest and other Fall social media efforts. Staff also attended the International Fresh Produce Association show in Atlanta and will be at the New York Produce Show in December. Staff attended the Food Export Conference in October to assure receipt of New Jersey funding as part of our agreement and attended the NJ Food Council Good Government Breakfast and assisted with the planning and execution of the Camden/Gloucester Legislators tour featuring underserved farmers.

**Insect Trap Inspections** – During the month of September, Plant Industry Division staff serviced insect traps at 21 soybean farms and 37 nurseries. Traps that have been up for more than five service visits are being taken down and this month traps were removed from eight soybean sites and five nursery sites. All traps were scheduled to be taken down by mid-October thus ending the field season. Soil from potato farms is also being examined for non-cyst nematodes

**Emergency Preparedness Outreach** – The Division of Animal Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator participated in a community event called "Bark in the Park" at the Atlantic County Fairgrounds. An informational booth was assembled to promote pet emergency preparedness and spread

awareness about County Animal Response Teams (CARTs) and State Animal Response Teams (SARTs) to the attendees of the fair. Outreach materials, such as the “Plain Talk on Pet Preparedness” and fact sheets on making a pet preparedness kit, were offered to attendees. Also, information on how to become involved in a CART or SART was provided to those interested and new volunteers were registered.

**Livestock Processing** – The North Jersey Processing Center has been working on alternative funding from groups that fund nonprofits. The Department supplied support to the group as they work to secure the land for the site. Commissioners had many questions regarding the working agreement between the Community college and the processing center as well as obtaining a clean site prior to transfer. The commissioners seemed split on the movement but decided to refer to a committee to work out the details.

**Lymantria dispar dispar (LDD – formerly known as gypsy moth) Surveys** – More than 68 percent of the requested LDD surveys have been completed and crews are continuing the remaining surveys in the northern counties. To date, a total of 18,748 acres of municipal and 1,017 acres of state lands have been proposed for single and double applications of Btk for the spring of 2025 in Burlington, Cape May, Morris, Passaic and Sussex counties.

**Farm to School Local Food for Schools Grant** – The Local Food for Schools Grant funding was extended through October 2025. School Districts participating in the grant received notification of the extension, and news of spend down. School Districts were instructed to spend 60 percent or more of their allocated funding by September 30, 2024. All School Districts who had expended all funding by this date could be eligible for additional funds and those that did not spend up to 60 percent would have funds swept for reallocation. School Districts participating in the Local Food for Schools Grant spent nearly \$900,000 in September of 2024. Funding will continue for all districts participating.

**Solid Waste Recycling Exemption** – Agricultural and Natural Resources Division staff reached out to a landowner in Monmouth County to further discuss their application for solid waste recycling exemptions so that they can receive woody material to create woodchips on a farm that they can use as a soil amendment on their crop-able acreage. Furthermore, the farm has engaged in clearing activities and the sale of firewood from their farm stand. Staff discussed all the necessary requirements, regulations, and exemptions the landowner must meet to be in compliance with these activities.

**Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Outreach** – With the migratory bird season underway, the Department posted a letter to poultry owners on the Division of Animal Health webpage as a reminder that migrating wild birds in the Atlantic flyway have the potential to carry Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. Poultry owners are urged to review their biosecurity practices and remain on alert for clinical signs of HPAI in their flock. Multi-species operations, particularly those with both poultry and ruminants on-site, are encouraged to mitigate areas in which the spread of disease between species may be at risk. Read the letter and more at <https://bit.ly/3D2Uw07>..

- It was confirmed that four humans contracted the H5N1 virus in Washington State. They are workers at a commercial egg farm. Read the story at <https://www.agdaily.com/livestock/poultry/first-presumed-human-cases-of-avian-flu-detected-in-washington-state/>
- The Department collaborated with the NJ Departments of Health and Environmental Protection for a one stop resource webpage with avian influenza information. The page can be found at <https://nj.gov/H5N1/>. An updated letter on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza was posted to the Department’s website and sent to known poultry owners.
- The Rutgers information sheet on HPAI for New Jersey famers owners can be found at <https://plant-pest-advisory.rutgers.edu/additional-information-for-new-jersey-farm-owners-on-h5n1-bird-flu/>
- Plans are in place with Rutgers Extension offices in each county to distribute PPE to dairy and poultry producers as needed.