

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

April 19, 2023

Nursery Inspections – Plant Industry Division staff have begun annual nursery inspections to ensure plants are free from injurious insects and disease pests. Staff conducted these inspections at 75 nursery locations and 110 plant dealers throughout the month. During the dealer inspections staff also inspected 588 seed packages for expiration and no violations were found. Eight federal inspections were conducted certifying the re-export and export of 5,500 bulbs, 5,625 tubers, 1.3 kilograms of seeds, 737,280 rooted plant cuttings and 102,336 rooted plants to Canada, Argentina, and Mexico. There were 32 domestic shipments of 6,720 plants, 17,469 plug plants, 26,352 rooted plants, 259,230 bulbs, 18,910 bare root plants, 105 trees and 40 roots to California, Idaho, Puerto Rico, Washington, Oregon, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Jersey Fresh Campaign – Marketing and Development Division staff finalized creative materials for the 2023 campaign “Grown Right. Here.” as asparagus billboards and radio spots are running currently. The Division continues data updates as part of the redevelopment of the FindJerseyFresh.com website with the intended relaunch in late Spring of 2023.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza – In response to a Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) detection in a New York live bird market, the Division of Animal Health identified epidemiological links to NJ-based live bird markets on April 4, 2023. These markets conducted a sell-down and cleaning and disinfection, some of which opted for the routine environmental sampling after. Each market reported no illness in birds. On March 31, the control and surveillance zone associated with an HPAI detection in Bucks County, Pa., which extended into Mercer and Hunterdon County, was released.

Summer Food Service Program – Jersey City Public Schools has been nominated as a USDA SFSP Summer Champion for FY 2022. Summer Champions are chosen as they have shown dedication, cooperation, and integrity throughout the fiscal year. Jersey City Public Schools operated 33 open sites in 2022. Sponsors provided meals not only to the schools within their district but also sponsored out-of-district sites, including The Boys and Girls Club, Danforth Avenue Early Childcare Center, Anthony Infante Early Childhood Center, New Jersey City University Project, (NJCU), New Jersey City University Project (NJCU) Sports Camp, Team Wilderness, Spectrum Works, Policy Academy, and Jersey City Educational Access Television, (JCETV). The sponsor also managed a special needs school with a modified menu to meet the needs of these children. In 2022, Jersey City Public Schools served 30,450 breakfast meals, 33,089 lunch meals and 713 supplement meals during Summer 2022 operations.

Spent Brewers Grains Outreach – Flying Fish Brewery in Camden County is looking for farms interested in spent brewers grain (32,000 pounds per week). Agricultural and Natural Resources Division staff instructed the brewery to attend or contact their local board of agriculture county meetings to see if any producers at those meetings were interested in the brewers grain or contact the New Jersey Beef Council to see if they could direct them towards producers who could take and feed brewers grains to their cattle.

Emergency Planning and Preparedness – Two NJDA Division of Animal Health staff presented at the NJ Environmental Health Association conference in March. The audience was comprised primarily of local health and environmental inspectors and departments. The topics of raising backyard poultry and flock disease prevention, including Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), were presented. Continued collaboration with New Jersey's commercial table egg producers has been conducted to identify site-specific HPAI response planning and areas in which the company would rely on government support. Needs in a large-scale HPAI response in New Jersey were reviewed with the new USDA Veterinary Services Emergency Coordinator, Dr. Christina Butler, in a meeting with the NJDA Division of Animal Health veterinarian on March 31.

Spotted Lanternfly – Plant Industry Division spotted lanternfly (SLF) along with USDA staff, are jointly working to reduce SLF populations at high priority locations such as seaports, airports, train yards and high-volume shipping operations to slow the spread of this pest. All treatments were stopped for the winter, during which time crews were physically scraping and crushing egg masses. So far this season, the SLF teams have destroyed more than 237,000 egg masses. During the month, crews scraped egg masses on trees at 60 properties. Before treatments can occur at a particular location, SLF teams must secure permission by getting property owners to sign the treatment agreement. This month five new permissions were secured. Properties where permission for treatment is secured need to be further assessed for the presence of the “Tree of Heaven” and during this reporting period 40 properties were assessed.

School Nutrition Program – The Food and Nutrition Division’s School Nutrition Programs unit is conducting user acceptance testing on the newly revamped Seamless Summer Option electronic application that will debut next month in the School Nutrition Electronic Application and Reimbursement System (SNEARS), for interested and eligible school districts to apply. A detailed memo is set to be broadcast to all school districts in the coming weeks. The Division’s Information Technology unit worked on enhancements to improve the application process.

FFA State Convention Planning – With the State FFA Convention next month, planning is well underway. The Office of Ag Education continues to send electronic mailings for judges’ invitations, as well as many thank you letters for events leading up to the convention. In addition, the state FFA officers participated in their state convention video shoot where they filmed portions of the state convention opening session videos. State Officers also attended the Retiring Address workshop, hosted by the New Jersey FFA Alumni and Supporters, where they practiced delivering their retiring addresses and received feedback.

Livestock Processing – Marketing and Development Division staff attended five meetings of dairy and livestock processors to further define programs and monies available for each specific project. Work continues on expanding the innovation center to have poultry and Dairy defined into the current Red Meat project. This will allow for a complete livestock protein innovation center. Technical support is being provided to livestock producers to set up 501-C-6 and C-3 not-for-profits to operate livestock processing.