

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

June 26, 2024

Summer EBT Update - The Food and Nutrition Division Summer EBT Unit is reporting that there are more than a half million children eligible to receive Summer EBT benefits across the state. This amounts to the distribution of over \$66 million in federal food security benefits. New Jersey is one of the 37 states participating in this new, permanent, nationwide USDA program to provide food dollars to low-income families with school-aged children over the summer months. A press release was issued by the Department on Wednesday, June 12 to coincide with Governor's post on X (formerly Twitter) on Thursday, June 13. Program support staff continue to manage an extremely high volume of calls and emails related to Summer EBT benefit card issuance and activation via the dedicated Summer EBT Hotline and School Resource email address

Personal Protective Equipment Distribution for Dairy Farmers – The Division of Animal Health (DAH) partnered with New Jersey Department of Health (NJ DOH) to coordinate an effort that will distribute Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to dairy farmers and their staff to ensure the equipment is available to help protect workers against potential exposure to H5N1. PPE will be made available by the NJ DOH through Rutgers Cooperative Extension county offices. The various PPE being offered includes coveralls, face shields, goggles, gloves, and shoe covers. Additionally, the NJ DOH has supplied NJDA with PPE to be distributed to dairy cattle handlers at the state's livestock fairs and shows. The DAH has provided fair and show organizers with additional guidance that targets recommendations for enhancing biosecurity protocols in the lactating dairy cattle exhibits. Outreach letters have been distributed to dairy producers, veterinarians, and other stakeholders regarding recommendations for Influenza A testing of dairy cattle and poultry, as well as USDA funding opportunities for dairy farmers. The USDA updated its avian influenza in website at <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/livestock>.

95th State FFA Convention – More than 700 FFA members, advisors and guests attended the State FFA Convention to recognize members and chapters for their accomplishments throughout the year and conduct State Association business. Fifty FFA members received their State Degrees and 125 received new FFA jackets through a special project of the New Jersey FFA Foundation. Over 100 judges and coordinators representing the NJDA, the USDA, the NJ Department of Education, FFA Alumni, past state officers and agricultural industries evaluated members competing in career development events. The convention welcomed many distinguished speakers including Secretary Wengryn; Division Director for Ag & Natural Resources, Frank Minch; New Jersey Farm Bureau President, Allen Carter; Past National FFA Officer, Tess Seibel; and National FFA Southern Region Vice President, Carter Howell. The conclusion of the convention saw the election of the 2024-25 State FFA Officer team with Niccolo Conte of the Allentown FFA Chapter elected as the new state president.

Jersey Fresh – Marketing and Development Division staff launched the Jersey Fresh 40th Anniversary Trivia Contest on Facebook and Instagram. Staff are also shipping and delivering point-of-purchase materials, writing articles, and continuing to publish and disseminate Jersey Fresh social media updates. Division staff attended the Allegiance/Foodtown show and is preparing for North American Agricultural Marketing Officials conference.

Boxwood Blight Program – The Plant Industry Division's Nursery Program staff conducted the first of three inspections of newly imported boxwood plants in late May. A total of 42 New Jersey nurseries are participating in the 2024 Boxwood Blight (BWB) Cleanliness Program. These nurseries were visited and visually inspected for symptoms of boxwood blight (*Calonectria pseudonaviculata*). Each nursery had been trained prior to this growing season and preapproved for quarantine compliance per the

guidelines outlined by the NJDA, then issued the necessary phytosanitary certificate. No incidents of BWB were detected during these inspections.

Animal Health Pathology Laboratory Tests – The Division of Animal Health’s Pathology Laboratory Section for April 2024 completed a total of 328 tests and/or procedures. Tests and/or procedures involved gross necropsy examination, histopathologic (microscopic), immunohistochemical, and parasitological preparation and evaluation and these cases generated additional diagnostic tests for other laboratory sections (e.g., bacteriology, virology, and molecular). Results from these case submissions help to support practicing veterinarians (large, mixed, and small animals), private food and companion animal owners, NJ State Agencies, racetracks, wildlife, zoos, and nonprofit animal facilities. Cases involved diagnostic testing for disease and/or cause of death diagnosis and routine and/or sporadic disease surveillance for large and small ruminants, companion animals, and exotic/zoo species; sudden death with no clinical symptoms; assessment of backyard and small flock health issues; large scale flock disease; law enforcement forensic investigation and animals exhibiting neurologic symptoms.

Organic and Regenerative Farming Board – Marketing and Development Division staff coordinated and hosted the first meeting of the Organic and Regenerative Farming Board as it begins to establish its officers and bylaws. The board will meet monthly while organizing and then quarterly after that.

Mapping to Prevent Flooding – Agricultural and Natural Resources Division staff created topographic maps for a farm field in Mercer County experiencing ponding and flooding issues as a result of road runoff. Topographic maps will help conservation planners decide what practices can be implemented to help remediate these ponding issues.

Lymantria Lymantria Dispar (LDD – Formerly Known as Gypsy Moth) – The LDD Aerial Suppression Program needed five operational days from May 8-28 to perform both single and double applications on 3,161 acres of municipal and state lands on the program. The program was conducted safely, with no incidents, and considered to be successful.

Summer Food Service Program – The Food and Nutrition Division’s Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) has approved 178 sponsors participating in the program this year. The final program operation trainings for the month of June were held on June 5 and June 12. This training is to ensure sponsors can administer their program, understand federal and state requirements, and program integrity. Summer Champions chosen by the Nutrition Program Specialists for their accomplishments were submitted to USDA/Mid-Atlantic Region Office (MARO) and featured in its June 3-7 SFSP week newsletter. Sponsors nominated were Bnos Melech, Oros Bais Yaakov, Salem County Special Services School District, Community Food Bank Hillside, City of Perth Amboy, Life Camp, and Newark Board of Education. Coordinators will participate in the monthly SFSP Community Nutrition call with USDA/MARO on Thursday, June 27.

Heat Stress Information – Secretary Wengryn released a heat stress message to the industry earlier this month reminding farmers that during these days when New Jersey is susceptible to heat waves (defined by meteorologists as three consecutive days of above-90-degree temperatures), farm managers should keep a close watch on employees who may be adversely impacted by the heat and to follow the advice provided in two documents – one each from Rutgers’ New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) and the New Jersey Department of Health – to help keep workers safe and comfortable during these high-heat times. Those documents can be found at: <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/FS747/#:~:text=Heat%20stress%20occurs%20when%20the,the%20risk%20of%20workplace%20incidents> and https://njfb.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Protecting_FarmworkersHEAT.pdf.