

Assistant Secretary's Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
November 15, 2023

Dairy Grants – Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (NE-DBIC) grant opportunities have been distributed to various operations that could apply if they so desire. The NE-DBIC released awards to existing processors on November 8. One project that will affect New Jersey is the Clover Farms Dairy storage tank project which will be used to segregate New Jersey produced milk to be utilized as class one milk for schools. Clover Farms is owned by Cream-O-Land Dairy based in Florence, N.J. Both companies will be presenting to New Jersey producers regarding the project and the outline of the new market that will be available to New Jersey producers.

Ag Education – The New Jersey FFA Association chartered its 37th chapter at Vineland High School, a four-year comprehensive public school located in Cumberland County. The state FFA officers performed the chapter installation ceremony with Vineland FFA members, NJDA Ag Education staff, and supporters in attendance. The chapter has 119 members who are eager to reap the benefits of leadership development and career preparation that FFA provides.

Emergency Preparedness – The Division of Animal Health's Emergency Preparedness Coordinator planned and participated in two events to support the state's animal emergency response resilience. On November 6, 2023, the NJDA hosted the state's largest commercial egg layer facility staff and USDA Veterinary Service staff in a virtual tabletop exercise, focused on the initial few hours of logistical planning in the event of a Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) detection at a commercial facility. The exercise provided participants a platform to practice collaboration and coordination between the three agencies and to identify gaps or challenges within the site-specific HPAI plan. On November 11, 2023, the NJDA and New Jersey Department of Human Services Office of Emergency Management hosted Absecon Veterinary Hospital in a Pet CPR and First Aid training event for our animal emergency sheltering partners. The training was tailored to the triage of injured or sick pets at the time of emergency shelter registration. There were stations with dog and cat CPR mannequins to allow the participants an opportunity to rehearse their practical skills.

Spotted Lanternfly Protection – Plant Industry Division nursery staff have been working with one northern New Jersey plant producer on updating its best management practices for spotted lanternfly quarantine compliance. As part of this update, inspectors discussed additional methods for safeguarding inspected shipments. USDA APHIS has offered trial samples of a netting that has been treated with an insecticide to shipping nurseries. The netting manufactured is intended for mosquito control but could potentially be used for spotted lanternfly protection. Plant shipments that have already been inspected for pest freedom could be covered by the Vestergaard netting as they await departure from the quarantine area. Future compliance agreements could implement these techniques if proven to be effective.

Farm to School – The Food and Nutrition Division's Farm to School Team planned for upcoming conventions and workshops that took place earlier this month. The team attended the New Jersey School Nutrition Association Conference on November 9-10 and had a table at the New Jersey Farm Bureau Convention on Nov. 13. The Farm to School Team also supported a Farm to School festival held in Newark for their elementary school students.

Farmland Assessment – NJDA Agricultural and Natural Resources Division staff assisted a farmer in Salem County who thought he was denied farmland assessment and was not notified of the reasoning. He indicated receiving a bill and was making installment payments. SADC staff which handles stewardship in the area drove by to check it out the farm and contacted local officials for additional details. The township's assessor returned the NJDA's call and indicated that the farm in question has been approved

for farmland assessment for 2023 and 2024. He added he has had two conversations with the farmer regarding this, and that he feels the farmer is confused. The Division will reach back out to the farmer to explain this and see if additional assistance is required.

Live Bird Marketing System – Division of Animal Health staff conducted unannounced inspections at 25 registered New Jersey live bird markets and sampled poultry from 17 markets for avian influenza. After collaboration between the NJDA and the USDA, it was decided to perform additional surveillance testing in live bird markets linked to the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza detection from Union County. An additional 11 markets had additional testing because of the Union County tracebacks. One market involved with the Union County location had a restocking/1st monthly test post-detection. Additional activities included the quarterly closure of 19 live bird markets; the inspection of one poultry distributor; an unannounced inspection of one poultry distributor connected to non-compliance from a Pennsylvania-based poultry distributor; and avian influenza testing of 32 backyard poultry flocks.

School Nutrition – The Food and Nutrition Division posted a memo regarding milk supply chain challenges related to half-pint packaging Issues in the School Nutrition Electronic Application and Reimbursement System (SNEARS) to assist School Food Authorities encountering shortages.

Jersey Fresh – The Marketing and Development Division ran fall Jersey Fresh marketing advertisements featuring TV, radio, and billboard creatives to promote fall produce, agritourism and Jersey Grown and Jersey Native Plants. Division staff continues to work with OIT and a vendor to finalize the FindJerseyFresh.com website. Also, staff are shipping and delivering point-of-purchase materials to retailers, writing articles, and continuing to publish and disseminate Jersey Fresh social media updates.

New Jersey Shade Tree Conference – Plant Industry Division staff set up and manned a booth at the New Jersey Shade Tree Federation Annual Conference in Cherry Hill. Staff focused their time educating attendees on new forest and landscape pests like the elm zigzag sawfly, Crepe myrtle bark scale, beech leaf disease and box tree moth. The booth received a high volume of participants asking questions and learning about the latest information regarding each pest. At this event, staff also had the opportunity to announce and answer questions about the spotted lanternfly county and municipal treatment reimbursement funding program.