Cornell Cooperative Extension Oneida County

FARM FLASH



Happy Holidays!

From the CCE Oneida Ag Team!
Wishing you and your family a
happy, safe and healthy
holiday season!



DECEMBER 2025 Livestock Issue

The Ag Team



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Attention Landowners

Did you purchase any new property this year? Is it part of your farm? Are you performing any agricultural business activity on it?

If so, January 1st through January 31st is Oneida County's Open Enrollment Period for NYS Agricultural Districts. Being part of a NYS Agricultural District affords you *additional protections* for your farming activities that you would otherwise not be eligible for outside an agricultural district. This is a voluntary program, and you must be the property owner to apply. Applications can be found at https://tinyurl.com/38xsv9bu

Upcoming Events

Farm Mapping: Learn How and Why to Create A Farm Map

December 11th from 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm on Zoom

In this one hour webinar we will demonstrate how to create an accurate farm map to have on the farm premises for the dreaded "what if" moments: Farm mapping can be useful for developing biosecurity plans and for emergency situations. This particular demonstration incorporates your home computer and personal knowledge and comfortability in using Google Earth. Not computer savvy? Plan to join the webinar and listen for alternative options.

Register online at: https://tinyurl.com/3dj9kvac

Crop Congress - Save the Date! Co-Hosted by Clinton Tractor

January 15 from 9:30 am - 3:00 pm at the Clinton VFW

Pesticide and CCA credits will be available - More Details to Follow

Register with Danielle at Clinton Tractor by calling (315) 853-6151 or (315) 404-8423 or email Danielle@clintontractor.net

Farm Family Safety: Common Farm Chemicals and Exploring Zoonotic Diseases

February 19th from 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm on Zoom

Reviewing safety, security and standard operating procedures to keep everyone safe at home and on farm with chemicals and zoonotic diseases.

Register online at: https://tinyurl.com/4khsvpt3

Recruiting Today

Dr. Bob Milligan, Dairy Strategies, L.L.C

I have written and taught recruiting for more than forty years. Over those many years, the best approach to recuring has changed dramatically. There are two reasons for this change:

- 1. The internet and social media have influenced recruiting best practices dramatically.
- We have moved from having, for most positions, more potential applicants than open positions than potential workers. This change has resulted from not having sufficient young workers to replace the retiring baby boomers.

These two have dramatically changed how you should recruit. One thing that has not changed is that recruiting is still marketing, you are **advertising** your farm business and the position that you have available.

This means that today you still need to develop recruiting marketing material. The difference is how you use that material.

Two related key differences are that today recruitment through your network is of premier importance and recruiting today may cost less dollars but requires much more time. Second, viewing recruitment as an ever-present system rather than as an event when you have an open position is increasingly important.

Below we review the part that has not changed other than becoming more important; namely developing recruitment materials. Then we address how to use that material in today's super competitive labor market.

Before jumping into material writing, let's think about what precedes the actual recruitment. It is tempting to start immediately writing recruitment materials. Several steps are needed to prepare for recruiting:

- Make certain you are planning to recruit for the right position. Are changes needed to fit current and future needs?
- Is there someone currently on staff that should be promoted to this position (vertical promotion) or assume some responsibilities currently in this position (horizontal promotion)?

Develop or update the job description of this position.
 The focus of the job description should be on responsibilities, not a list of tasks. Tasks can be listed under each of the small number of responsibilities. Don't forget to include three responsibilities that are not often included: 1) supervisory responsibilities if included in the position, 2)professional development expectations, and 3) team responsibilities

Develop Recruitment Materials

Think about your crop and livestock enterprises. You have systems, processes, and SOPs that have been developed, implemented, and improved over the days, months, and years. Hiring, however, has been mostly viewed as an individual event each time we have an opening. Why the difference? The answer can be that hiring happens infrequently. That answer leaves out two critical criteria for hiring success. The first is that recruitment should be an ongoing process. You should always be looking for great candidates and promoting your farm/business. The second is that recruitment requires the continuous improvement that comes from being viewed as a process.

I encourage you to do some brainstorming and notetaking before writing the recruitment materials. Answer some or all following:

- List words and phrases that describe the positive attributes of your farm business.
- List words and phrases that describe the positive attributes of this position.
- Describe the position.
- What are the qualifications required for success in the position?
- What are great candidates for this position doing now (be creative)?

I share the following to emphasize the importance of the first two bullets.

In a recent workshop, the participants prepared a recruitment statement that could serve as a want ad, an internet posting, or a job posting. What they wrote was detailed, accurate, and clear. The statements, however, would likely not have had as positive an impact as they wished. They lacked perhaps the most important quality in recruitment materials – excitement, appeal.

The purpose of recruitment is to attract applicants for your open position – to promote. advertise - the position and your farm or business. You want your recruitment materials to stimulate interest and excitement about the position and your farm. You do this be promoting the positive attributes of your farm and the position – the pizzazz.

I recommend the following a six-step process for writing recruitment materials using the notes from your brainstorming:

- 1. Lead with a positive statement or job characteristic that attracts attention. This is needed to attract attention and enhance the likelihood the reader will continue reading.
- 2. Give the job title and the major responsibilities.
- 3. Portray positives of the farm and the position.
- 4. Explain the competencies required and any essential qualifications for success in the position. Include only necessary qualifications.
- 5. Highlight positive attributes of the compensation package. (Legal requirements for including compensation in recruitment materials is changing in many states; state abreast of changes.)
- 6. Be clear about how to apply for the job including what is required resume, cover letter, standard application.

As you develop positive recruitment material, make certain you focus on the first and third steps above. Keep in mind that recruitment is advertising. Further, it is likely that the reader will not be the person who applies. Rather, a family member, friend, or colleague may see it and refer them to your material. It must be compelling, not just accurate and descriptive!

Competing in Today's Super Competitive Labor Market

The idea that recruitment is a process becomes even more crucial as network importance increases. You and your farm business need to be seen in your community. Have you thought about: volunteering to help your local FFA chapter, offering a college scholarship at your local high school, joining a community business or service organization.

To enhance your network success, I encourage you to develop a one-page flyer using your recruitment written material and a couple of farm/workforce pictures. You can then distribute this flyer, including as an email attachment, to everyone in your network: employees, agribusiness professionals, other farmers, friends, etc.

Your network should only be one part of a recruitment campaign. I recommend a recruitment blitz that starts with your network and uses a wide variety of appropriate methods including:

- Word of mouth to everyone you talk to.
- Email to employees, partners, agribusinesses, others with the recruitment statement and/or flyer as an attachment.
- Social Media Own website, Facebook, Craigslist, etc.
- Position focused recruitment website AgCareers.com, Hansen Agri-Placement, AgHires.
- Local recruitment websites newspapers.
- Industry careers centers universities, industry groups.
- Recruitment services consultans, recruitment agencies.

Crop Season Safety

Jim Carrabba, Joe Lawrence, and Kristen Workman

Farming is not just a job. It is a way of life. Unfortunately, many dangers are associated with this vocation. Individuals on farms are exposed to a host of mechanical and environmental hazards every day that increase risk of injury or death. It is vitally important to be safe and keep employees safe and productive. Working safely and avoiding mishaps saves money and makes your operation more efficient, but most important, everyone should go home safely at the end of the day!

Tractors and Machinery

Tractors and large, heavy machinery are used on just about every type of farm. Approximately two-thirds of fatalities on a farm are associated with tractors and other machinery. Common types of machinery-related incidents include tractor rollovers, runovers, struck-by incidents, crushing incidents, power-take-off (PTO) entanglements, other machinery entanglements, and roadway collisions. ROPS (rollover protective structures) effectively protect the tractor operator in a rollover, limiting the rollover and creating a safe area around the operator's seat. Call 1-877-ROPS-R4U (1-877-767-7748) or visit ROPSr4u.com for assistance to install a ROPS system and receive potential rebates towards the cost. Low-cost retrofit PTO shields can be purchased from the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health at necenter.org/portfolio/pto-safety/.

Always pay attention to the task when working with farm machinery. Keep young children and other bystanders out of the area where machinery is being used. Farm employees should wear high-visibility clothing to prevent run-over incidents. Pre-season maintenance is critical to reduce risk and lost time during critical tasks. Always shut off machinery and wait until it stops completely before performing any maintenance or repairs. If you have to work under raised equipment, make sure it is properly locked out, or blocked up with appropriately sized jackstands.

Managing the Fatigue During the Busy Season

Being overtired can lead to injuries and mishaps. Fatigued operators are more likely to make mistakes and especially so when combined with complacency. Most people require at least seven hours of sleep for optimal performance. Too little sleep, especially over consecutive nights, can result in impaired function and significantly reduced reaction time.

Workers should have water and snacks and stay well-hydrated. It is important to take breaks occasionally. Be careful about rushing to beat the weather. One farmer commented, "Productive time substantially decreases after dark."

Manure Storage and Handling

Manure management can pose human and environmental safety hazards from storage and land application. Adequate volume of storage in well-maintained facilities can reduce many of these risks, allowing flexibility to prevent discharges and spreading during highrisk conditions. Often the conditions that have the highest risk for environmental damage are also the most dangerous for employee safety. Have an emergency action plan and make sure employees are trained to execute that plan.

Manure Collection and Storage Facilities

- Drowning hazards may exist, especially where farm vehicles are operated in proximity to these facilities. Use control measures like safety stops and gates at push-off ramps and unloading areas. Install signs, fences, ladders, and other devices to keep vehicles and people away from storage structures and other dangerous areas.
- Inhalation of manure gases are possible, with the highest risks associated with pumping, mixing, agitation and clean-out. If you witness someone being overcome by manure gas, **DO NOT** attempt to offer assistance without proper training and protective equipment, so you don't become a victim yourself.
- Confined space entry training should be conducted on your farm and proper protocols should be used whenever working in or around these areas on your farm.
- Anaerobic digesters, electric generation plants, and biogas facilities have unique safety issues related to their operation. Be aware of mechanical, explosion, voltage, atmospheric, fire, noise, spill, and other specific precautions as outlined by the Environmental Protection Agency's guidance document.

Manure Transfer and Application

- Many farms transfer manure using pipelines or use pumps and hoses to transfer or apply manure. These systems operate under high pressure and must not be left unattended while transferring or applying material. Valves and shutoffs should be check at least annually.
- Road safety is always important when farm equipment is operated on the road. In addition to normal roadway safety issues, farmers should be prepared to perform a spill response if a manure spreader or truck were to tip over.

Crop Harvest

Harvesting crops is often viewed as a race against the clock due to weather and stage of crop growth. Advances in animal nutrition and changing economics continue to emphasize the need for high forage quality. This increases pressure on farmers to optimize their forages, which intensifies the risk of machinery error and operator fatigue. At the end of the day, as important as our crops are to the farm, they are not worth risking human life.

While we cannot manage the weather, we can manage for the weather. Pre-season planning increases the chances of meeting forage quality goals while minimizing risk of breakdown and injury.

Forage Storage

Fermented forage (silage) is the most common form of forage for most dairy operations. Horizontal silos (bunks or piles) offer a number of logistical benefits to store large volumes of silage. However, these structures also present challenges and concerns related to forage preservation and safety. Size, particularly height, of many of these structures can present safety hazards during ensiling and feedout. Fortunately, many of the practices needed to improve preservation of feed also improve safety conditions.

Guidelines for successful preservation of silage include achieving proper forage dry matter at ensiling, high silage densities, managing slopes, staying within the defined structural footprint, and having right sized equipment for both ensiling and feedout.

Silo gases, particularly right after ensiling, present a significant danger and while often associated with confined spaces, are known to occur around horizontal silos as well. Take extreme caution in confined spaces but be aware of your surroundings when working around any silage.

The most significant risks at feedout are associated with falls and avalanches. Removing plastic covers and spoilage presents a significant fall risk. Following guidelines for optimum silage preservation will reduce spoilage issues.

Silage should not be piled higher than the reach of the unloading equipment to prevent undermining.

No one should ever walk near the face of the pile; avalanches can happen without warning. For safety near silage faces, best practice includes staying a minimum of three times the height of the face away.

Farm safety is everyone's responsibility. Maintaining good protocols and providing recurring training goes a long way to keep everyone safe. **Farm safety is no accident.**

Understanding Consumer Response to Meat Prices at Farmers Markets

Luca Rigotti, Matthew N. LeRoux, Leslie Verteramo Chiu, and Todd M. Schmit Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management Cornell University,

Many farmers market vendors make pricing decisions based on experience, intuition, or what neighboring vendors charge. While these strategies may work in the short term, they don't reflect actual market conditions or provide the precision needed in a market that's becoming increasingly competitive, especially as grocery stores begin offering more locally branded products. This study helps bridge that knowledge gap. By analyzing two years of point-of-sale data from multiple meat vendors in New York State, we explore how customers respond to different meat prices. The result is a powerful dataset that can guide better pricing decisions and ultimately improve farm profitability.

A central concept in this study is how much customer demand changes when prices change, referred to as the price elasticity of demand. When demand is own-price elastic, a small increase in the price of a specific product (for example, a 1% price increase in pork) causes a relatively large drop (more than 1%) in the quantity sold of that same product. Conversely, if it's inelastic, the quantity sold doesn't change much when the price changes. We also look at cross-price elasticity, which reflects whether customers substitute one product for another, like switching from beef to chicken when the price of beef rises. Understanding own- and cross- price elasticities among meats gives us insight into how flexible shoppers are when making decisions and whether they are comparing across vendors and meat types.

A Unique Market Environment

Unlike grocery stores, FMs operate in a distinct environment. Vendors are often the producers themselves, meaning they manage both production and sales to consumers. FM vendors typically attend markets once per week, sell a limited and seasonal inventory, and foster direct relationships with customers. All these factors influence how consumers behave and respond to pricing.

In this study, we analyzed over 40,000 transactions from six livestock farms at 15 different farmers markets. Our economic analysis accounted for variations across farms and farmers markets, product quality differences by cuts, and seasonal factors, allowing us to estimate specifically how customers react to changes in prices for beef, pork, and chicken.

Our primary hypothesis was that customers will be relatively less sensitive to price changes at farmers markets than those in traditional retail settings, largely due to closer relationships with vendors and a shared commitment to local food systems. We also hypothesized that customers don't easily substitute meat types in farmers markets, either because of vendor loyalty or limited species availability at any given market.

Key Findings:

- Prok and chicken showed elastic demand, meaning price increases are likely to reduce revenue.
- Beef demand was relatively inelastic, suggesting that moderate price increases may not significantly affect sales.
- There was no evidence of cross-price effects, indicating that consumers don't typically switch between species based on price. This may be partly due to the fact that not all vendors offers all species at once, limiting shoppers' ability to substitute. In other words, cross-price elasticities are hard to identify when customers aren't presented with the full set of choices simultaneously.

What This Means for Farmers

These results suggest that pricing decisions at farmers markets are more consequential than they might seem. Because pork and chicken buyers are more price-sensitive, vendors selling these products need to analyze carefully when considering price increases. Raising prices could lead to fewer sales and reduced revenue. Instead, these vendors might explore bundling products, adjusting portion sizes, or offering promotions to increase the perceived value without changing prices.

For beef vendors, there is more flexibility. With more inelastic demand, a modest price increase might improve revenue without driving away customers. However, this should still be done cautiously and ideally tested with sales data over a few weeks.

Additionally, since cross-price responses are limited and not all farms offer all species, each vendor's product occupies a relatively independent space in the market. This vendor loyalty is a unique strength, one that should be reinforced through storytelling (a narrative of the farm), branding, and consistent quality. With increasing availability of "local" labels in grocery stores, FM vendors must be more intentional and strategic than ever.

Final Takeaways

Farmers must become more aware of how pricing affects their bottom line. This study makes it clear that price setting shouldn't be guesswork. Point-of-sale systems are now affordable and easy to use, and the data they provide can be transformative. By tracking sales across time and products, vendors can spot trends, test pricing strategies, and refine their approach. Vendors should also keep an eye on their competitors in grocery stores. As traditional retailers lean into local food marketing, farmers markets are no longer the only place offering "local" meat. Farmers who understand how their prices compare, and how their customers respond, are better equipped to maintain their competitive edge.

In short, this research highlights the importance of combining local knowledge with real sales data. With a better grasp of how prices impact sales, farmers can adjust strategies in ways that strengthen their position in a changing marketplace.

If you would like to read the full article, you can find it in the following link:

Rigotti, Luca, LeRoux, Matthew, Verteramo Chiu, Leslie; Schmit, Todd M., Price Elasticities of Demand for Meat Products at Farmers Markets (February 25, 2025). Cornell SC Johnson College of Business Research Paper. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=5157766 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5157766

Did You Know?

CCE Oneida County offers recordings of previous agriculture related meetings on our YouTube page. Use this link https://tinyurl.com/446dknaz **OR** scan the QR Code.



Oneida County Public Market, Here for YOU Year-Round Beth Irons

When the fall winds begin, many community-based farmers markets are winding down their annual seasons and putting gardens and fields to bed for the upcoming winter. But at the Oneida County Public Market, many are gearing up to continue bringing their products to market for you right through the holiday and winter seasons. Creative ways to extend the growing season, and the robust harvest of storage products, help to ensure fresh, healthy, locally produced foods right through the colder parts of the year in our area. The Oneida County Public Market is here for you year-round!

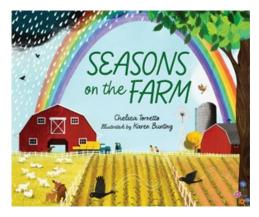
Many producers offer value-added products in addition to the produce they bring to the market each week. Holiday gift baskets and homespun stocking stuffers pop up at booths to help meet the gift-giving needs of our shoppers. The "thank you" gifts left for mail deliverers, employees and neighbors might include a jar of Christmas jam, local barbeque sauce or hand-made soaps or a candle. And farmers and producers stand ready to help complete menus for family gatherings and looked-forward-to traditional dinners over the next few months. In fact, the sooner you talk to your favorite vendor to secure the Thanksgiving turkey or the Christmas ham the better!

Come to the Public Market to get that hard-to-shop-for person on your list that unique, can't-find-it-anywhere-else item from one of our crafters or artisans. From a cuddle-worthy blanket to a characteristic local photo to hand-made artifacts and trinkets, if you're looking for something unmatched anywhere else – get yourself to the Oneida County Public Market at Union Station's Main Lobby (321 Main Street, Utica, NY) on Saturdays from 9:00am to 1:00pm through December 20.

After the holiday season, we're there for you when you get hit with fits of cabin fever and just want to get out of the house! We have music and activities planned right through April, 2026 on every OTHER Saturday beginning January 10, 2026. Markets are always Saturdays, 9:00am to 1:00pm. And we continue to hold market sessions in the Main Lobby of Union Station in downtown Utica's historic Bagg's Square (321 Main Street, Utica).

Stay up-to-date on the happenings at the Oneida County Public Market on social media by liking us Facebook and Instagram. And go to our website (www.oneidacountypublicmarket.com) and sign up for our monthly newsletter. See you at the market – all winter!

Help Grow the Next Generation: Support Children's Appreciation of Agriculture!



Will you volunteer an hour of your time to promote agriculture in schools? Agricultural Literacy Week is an annual event held every March coordinated by New York Agriculture in the Classroom and implemented by Oneida County 4-H to support children's appreciation of agriculture.

Each March, volunteer readers go into local elementary classrooms to read the featured book and do a related activity. We usually do two weeks due to the number of registered classrooms. The book for 2026 is **Seasons on the Farm;** Written by Chelsea Tornetto, Illustrated by Karen Bunting.

Register using the QR Code or link: https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/ form/SV 5jsN2vQkiZuYOEK

Want the link emailed to you? Contact: Celeste Oppito, 4-H Educator cmo95@cornell.edu



Bi-Weekly Ag Email

Sometimes information about upcoming events come in too late to make it into Farm Flash. In order to counteract missing out on information we created a bi-weekly Ag Email for updates exclusively on upcoming events, important deadlines and useful resources!

Contact Alex Harrington at (315) 736-3394 ext. 255 or ash273@cornell.edu to be added to the Email Update List.

Manure applicators must recognize and respond when conditions are at high risk for runoff

Kristen Workman, Jason Oliver and Sara Latessa

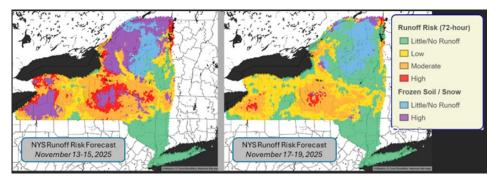


FIGURE 1. NY state 72-hour runoff risk forecast for November 13-15 (left) and November 17-19 (right) as queried at runoff -risk.nrcc.cornell.edu/ny/ on November 13, 2025.

We remind farmers and manure applicators to recognize and respond when conditions are at high risk for runoff when making decisions about manure storage management and applications this fall and winter. While late corn silage harvest has created situations where some manure storages may be approaching their full operational capacity, it is critical to follow the Revised Winter And Wet Weather Manure Spreading Guidance and the spreading plans in your CNMP.

You can monitor forecasts to identify days in the near term that may have conditions with lower risk using the **Runoff Risk Forecast for New York State**. Figure 1 shows the forecast for the next three days compared to the longer term forecast for a week out. By waiting just two or three days, some locations will go from high runoff risk to low or no risk. Be sure to check this and any local weather forecasts on the day of spreading to confirm the assumptions of the runoff forecast and actual conditions on that day.

The CAFO Permit requires that, "Farm personnel shall manage application rates and timing so as to prevent runoff from leaving crop fields during any application event," and prohibits manure applications on saturated or frozen-saturated soils or when applied at a rate that causes the soil to become saturated at the time of that application. When winter or wet weather conditions[i] exist, manure applications must follow the revised winter and wet weather guidance which outlines the following.

1. Recognizing high risk situations:

- Significant rainfall or snowmelt is predicted within the next 48 hours.
- Concrete frost, ice layer on soil or in snowpack, deep or dense snow, or water saturated in soil is present.
- Tile drains are flowing at least moderately form field drainage (as opposed to ground water interception).

2. Avoid spreading on fields with:

- Past runoff problems or groundwater/well problems
- Significant surface runoff or subsurface flow that can reach a stream or ditch.
- An orientation toward a stream or watercourse with a slope greater than 3 to 5%.
- Concentrated flows are present in the field.

3. Implement strategies to reduce runoff risk:

- Store manure until lower risk conditions return.
- Apply to lower risk fields (identified in your CNMP).
- Apply to fields with groundcover (hay fields, established cover crops).
- Inject or incorporate manure immediately.
- Increase setback distances from waterways (ditches, streams, etc.).
- Reduce spreading rates and/or breakup applications over multiple days.
- Do not spread in or near areas of the fields that produce runoff (concentrated flows, grassed waterways, etc.).
- Monitor tile outlets during manure application.

If a CAFO finds itself in an emergency situation, the farm should discuss with their AEM certified planner other interim solutions that may be available to the farm to alleviate the emergency.

Farms that do not operate under the CAFO permit should also heed these strategies for manure management and application, as no farm is allowed to create a water quality violation as a result of a manure application.

For questions, please contact:

- The farm's CNMP planner for help identifying low risk fields, adjusting rates and setbacks, concerns about manure storage capacity, or farm or field specific questions.
- Kirsten Workman, PRO-DAIRY Nutrient Management & Environmental Sustainability Specialist, 607-255-4890 or kw566@cornell.edu, for technical assistance, questions about runoff risk forecast tool or general guidance, especially third-party manure applicators who do not work directly with CNMP planners.
- Sara Latessa, NYSDEC Division of Water, sara.latessa@dec.ny.gov for questions related to CAFO permit.

*Wet weather spreading conditions means significant precipitation (e.g., greater than 0.25 inches of rain within 24 hours when soils are approaching saturation or greater than 1 inch of rain independent of soil moisture content) and/or snowmelt events (e.g., greater than 40°F for 6 hours or more) is forecasted within the next 48 hours. Winter spreading conditions means soil is frozen (4"+), snow covered (4"+), or encumbered by significant surface icing. As defined by the NYSDEC CAFO General Permit (GP-0-22-001)

Meat Marketing with MeatSuite.com

MeatSuite.com is a free resource provided by Cornell University where NY meat farmers can create a farm profile and list their bulk (wholes, halves, and quarters) and bundled (ex. grilling bundles) meat products. All animal proteins are able to be advertised.

How do I sign up? Visit www.meatsuite.com to create your **FREE** farm profiles. You must list at least one product from your farm to have your profile go live. You'll also have access to Cornell's free Meat Price Calculator, a helpful tool for pricing your meat to make a profit.

If you have questions on creating a profile or using the Meat Price Calculator please reach out to Marylynn Collins at mrm7@cornell.edu or call (315) 736-3394 ext. 132



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Looking for a new way to advertise your business? Think about sponsoring Farm Flash for 2026. If you're interested contact Alex Harrington at ash273@cornell.edu or call (315) 736-3394 x 255.

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