

# AG NEWS

Jan/Feb 2026

## Cornell Cooperative Extension Delaware County



### SOMETIMES THE BEST TOOL IS THE ONE YOU FORGOT ABOUT

*by Desiree Keever*

Early December brought a flurry of activity on our farm as we bred for September calves. After the last heifer was bred, I found myself cleaning the barn one quiet morning, replaying the past few weeks in my head. I almost sent a thank-you text to a colleague for a timely reality check—until I realized it was barely 5 a.m. The appreciation was real just the same.

That conversation was a reminder that sometimes we need to step back and use the tools available to us, even the ones we've convinced ourselves we don't really need. In my case, that tool was a Kamar heat detector. I hadn't used them in years because I told myself if I was spending enough time with the animals, I should be able to catch every heat. A little pride may have played a role there.

But the reality is, we all have a lot going on every day. Tools that help us work more efficiently shouldn't be overlooked—especially when they help us make better use of our time and effort. As a new year begins, this feels especially timely. Over the fall, I had many conversations with producers that included a familiar refrain: "I should be able to..." or "I should have a handle on this..." because we're putting in the hours.

The truth is, we're only human. With tighter margins and increasing demands, we're all trying to do more with the same 24 hours. Whether it's breeding programs, transition cow management, crop rotations, point-of-sale systems, farm records, or yield tracking, there is a lot to keep straight. Thankfully, there are both new and tried-and-true tools and technologies to help us stay organized, improve results, and get more value from the work we're already doing. The start of a new year often brings fresh energy and a desire to improve. This is a great time to choose one or two areas to tighten up—something that saves time, boosts profitability, or ideally, does both. Sometimes setting pride aside and getting a little help or support is exactly what moves the needle.

We're excited to be fully staffed and offering a wide array of workshops and educational opportunities this year, designed to help farms of all types work more efficiently. We're always happy to provide one-on-one support tailored to your operation as well. If there's an area you'd like to strengthen in the year ahead, don't hesitate to reach out—we'd love to work with you.

# Updates:

## Delaware Bounty Website Now Available

We are excited to announce the official Delaware Bounty website is now live and accessible. Discover local food producers and businesses who sell directly to consumers throughout Delaware County.

Producers who have not yet signed up to be included in our listing and would like to enroll can scan the QR code below.

Printed copies of the Delaware Bounty Local Food Map are still available at the CCE office in Hamden, as well as at several local vendors and producer locations throughout the county.

 [www.delawarebounty.org](http://www.delawarebounty.org)



Want even  
more  
visibility???  
Consider an  
Ad!



Please Join Us in  
Welcoming Emily  
Roach back to the  
CCE Family as our  
new Executive  
Director



### CCE Delaware Agriculture Program Staff

- Paul Cerosaletti, MS, CCA Agricultural Program Team Leader
- Desiree Keever, JD Ag Issues Leader
- Lila Shafer, BT Horticulture
- Autumn Madugno, Ag in the Classroom Educator
- Jessica Ladd, Ag/HE Administrative Assistant

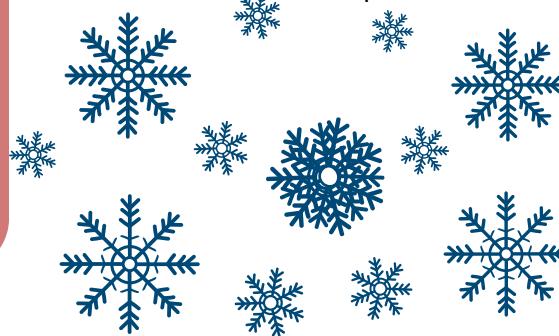
### NYC Watershed Agricultural Program Staff:

- Dale Dewing, MS CCA Watershed Program Leader
- Meghan Potter, Precision Feed Management Team Leader
- Rich Toebe, PAS Watershed Livestock Educator
- April Wright Lucas, PAS CCA Precision Feed Management Specialist
- James Romack, MS Precision Feed Management Specialist
- Kim Holden, Sr. Administrative Assistant

Emily returns to CCE with more than 15 years of extension experience, including a variety of leadership and programmatic roles within the 4-H program. CCE has been an integral part of Emily's life for more than 35 years, giving her a deep understanding of our mission and the community we serve.

Emily joins us as CCE's Executive Director, where she is excited to once again support our community, partners, volunteers, and youth through meaningful educational opportunities across the county. She brings a strong commitment to service, collaboration, and program growth, and looks forward to expanding offerings while building on CCE's long-standing impact.

We are thrilled to have Emily back and look forward to the new opportunities ahead under her leadership



### Stay Connected:

- [ccedelaware.org](http://ccedelaware.org)
- Follow us on Facebook: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County: Agriculture
- Email: [delaware@cornell.edu](mailto:delaware@cornell.edu)
- Phone 607.865.6531

# Upcoming Programs

## Online Learning

### 2026 CCE Cut Flowers Webinar Series

**January 6,13,20,27, February 3, 2026**

**1:00PM-2:00PM**

[https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/2026CutFlowerWebinarSeries\\_201](https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/2026CutFlowerWebinarSeries_201)

A very popular series of online events you won't want to miss, with topflight speakers, a wide variety of subjects concerning growing cut flowers and plenty of interaction between speakers and attendees.

**\$60.00 (all 5 Sessions) \$20 for Single Session**

### Converting Old Dairy Barns into Swine Facilities

**January 21, 2026 6PM-7PM**

<https://tinyurl.com/BarnConversion25>

Tim Terry, Farm Strategic Planning Specialist with Pro-Dairy, will be sharing more about what's needed for a dairy-to-swine facility conversion.

### Pastured Beef & Dairy IMP

**January 22, 2026 10AM-11 AM**

**Presenter: Bryony Sands**

[https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eOG8Kg0UyzviAuO](https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eOG8Kg0UyzviAuO)

Learn about grazing management practices, biological control options, and ways to conserve beneficial insects like dung beetles—all key components of a sustainable pasture IPM program.



### I Thought I was Covered for that! Farm Insurance Webinar series

- Jan 13, 2026 12-1:30PM Insurance Risk Management 101
- Jan 20, 2026 12-1:30 PM Liability Insurance
- Jan 27, 2026 12-1:30 PM Crop Insurance & Disaster Coverage
- Feb 3, 2026 12-1:30 PM Insuring People
- Feb 10, 2026 12-1:30 PM Property Insurance

[https://cornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_YAwNzmaQS1GLoZneTLxmxw](https://cornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_YAwNzmaQS1GLoZneTLxmxw)

### Dairy and Beef Cattle Internal Parasites IPM

**January 29, 2026 10 AM-11 AM**

**Presenter Byron Sands**

[https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eOG8Kg0UyzviAuO](https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eOG8Kg0UyzviAuO)

This training will provide tools for monitoring parasites loads, interpreting fecal egg counts, and developing strategic deworming plans.

### Managing Ticks on Horses Webinar

**February 19, 2026 1:30PM - 2:30 PM**

**Presenter: Dr. Erika Machtiger**

[https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3ad8DGueDZAIVi4](https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3ad8DGueDZAIVi4)

Participants will learn how to reduce ticks exposure through habitat management, host protection, and other integrated control tactics that minimize risk to horses and humans alike.

### Tick IPM & New Approaches to Fly Thresholds on Cattle

**March 5, 2026 10AM-12PM**

**Presenter: Dr. Cassandra Olds**

[https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_bpIWkbckNsGo0gm](https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bpIWkbckNsGo0gm)

This webinar will explore two timely livestock IPM topics: managing ticks on cattle and rethinking traditional fly thresholds.

### Building Your Farm Future: Practical Steps for New Farmers Webinar Series



This course is designed to help aspiring and beginning farmers to:

- Build confidence in their ability to start and run a farm business.
- Gain a deeper understanding of resources needed for success.
- Identify personal knowledge gaps and learn where to find help.
- Explore available resources for starting and managing a farm business.

[https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/Beg\\_Farmer\\_Practical\\_Steps\\_201](https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/Beg_Farmer_Practical_Steps_201)

- Jan 21, 2026 (Introspection, Goal Setting, and Vision)
- Jan 28, 2026 (Livestock Focus)
- Feb 04, 2026 (Infrastructure Focus)
- Feb 11, 2026 (Fruit & Veg Focus)
- Feb 18, 2026 (Ornamental Hort. Focus)
- Feb 25, 2026 (Business Planning & Marketing)

**\$75.00 for all 6 weeks**

### 2025 Ag Program Sponsors

#### Platinum Sponsor:

- Farm Credit East ACA
- Delaware County Farm Bureau
- Albano's Precision Application
- Albano's Custom Harvesting

#### Gold Sponsor:

- Lutz Feed Co.

#### Silver Sponsor:

- Wayne Bank
- Robertsons Seed

#### Bronze Sponsor:

- Stamford Farmers Cooperative

*This support of our programming is very much appreciated by us & the farms we serve.*

An Extended Thank You to our Ag program supporters and program grant donors

- Dairy's Foundation
- O'Connor Foundation
- DelCo EcoDev
- NY Beef Industry Council
- Delaware County Rural Healthcare Alliance

# Upcoming Programs



## Dairy Business Blueprint: Business Plan Writing for Dairy Farms

By request, tailored specifically for dairy farms, a workshop series where you will learn & write each component of a **complete business plan**. Each session will focus on one section, with opportunity for feedback and **1-1 support** to write a business plan specific to your farm. This is an important tool in decision making and propelling your farm forward with focus, key to successful grant funding and optimizing interest rates when seeking loan funding.

- Session 1: Thurs Jan 15<sup>th</sup> **Farm Vision, Operations & Management**
- Session 2: Thurs Jan 29<sup>th</sup> **SWOT Analysis & Cost of Production**
- Session 3: Thurs Feb 12<sup>th</sup> **Financial Summary**
- Session 4: Thurs Feb 26<sup>th</sup> **Business Strategies & Implementation Plan**
- Session 5: Thurs Mar 12<sup>th</sup> **Financial Projections**

**All session 1-3 pm  
\$45 per farm, limit 6 farms**

CCE Delaware, 34570 St. Hwy. 10, Hamden



**Register at: <https://tinyurl.com/dairyblueprint>**

## Starting A Home Garden-6-week series

Week 1 Feb 10, 5:00pm-6:30pm - Starting a Garden

- What to grow, when to start, and how to plan

Week 2 Feb 24, 5:00pm-6:30pm- Planning a Garden

- From seed packets to sketching a garden plan

Week 3 Mar 10, 5:00pm-6:30pm - Seed Starting Setups and Supplies

- Setting up a successful indoor environment

Week 4 Mar 24, 5:00pm-6:30pm - Starting Seeds Indoors

- Hands-on seed planting

Week 5 April 7, 5:00pm-6:30pm - Seedling Care & Problem Solving

- Keeping seedlings healthy after germination

Week 6 April 21, 5:00pm-6:30pm - Hardening off & Transitioning to the Garden

- Moving plants outdoors successfully

**Registration Opens Soon! Check the CCE DC Website**

## Certified Pesticide Applicator Training

**February 3, 2026 10:30 AM-3:30 PM**

**CCEDC Hamden 34570 St Hwy 10 Hamden, NY 13782**

This training we anticipate **3.0 CORE DEC**

**recertifications credits** to be offered. Lunch

provided. **\$10 registration fee**

<https://tinyurl.com/DECCORE>



## Be On The Look Out 2026 Programming

- Horse Workshop
- Beef, Sheep & Goat Production
- Calf Health Barn Meeting
- Crop Production & Management

Watershed Agricultural Council  
[nycwatershed.org](http://nycwatershed.org)



## Stay on the Lookout: Winter Programming

Check our website for  
registration information

## 2026 Winter Greenhouse & Growers School

**January 21, 2026 8AM-12:30 PM**



CCEDC will be hosting an in-person workshop for this event. Please join us and have opportunities to gain pesticide credits from 3 of the sessions.

- 8:00 - 8:25 AM: Check in/registration
- 8:30 - 9:30 AM: Building Better Pest Programs – Targeted Timing and Life Cycles\*\*\* GGS Pro Dr. Karen Stever
- 9:30 - 10:30 AM: Common, Uncommon & Complex\*\*\* GGS Pro Dr. George Grant
- 10:30 - 10:45 AM: Break
- 10:45 - 11:00 AM: New York State Flower Industries update Sue Adams, President NYSFI
- 11:00 - 11:30 AM: Ag & Markets Update Michael Dorgan
- 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM: Avoid Diseases to Have Fabulous Foliage and Flowers Dr. Margery Daughtrey

**Cost:**  
**\$40.00**

**Register:**  
<https://square.link/u/zJ9fQORy>



## NY Annie's Project: Social Media 201



CCE Delaware County office  
34570 State Hwy 10 Suite #2  
Hamden, NY 13782

**March 11, 2026 11:30 AM-1:30 PM**

**March 18, 2026 11:30AM-1:30 PM**

**March 25, 2026 11:30AM-1:30PM**

This event is a hybrid series focused on giving you the tools to build your toolbox and level up your social media strategies for 2026! Those that complete the series will complete a social media plan for 2026, as well as feel more confident in utilizing different social media and AI tools.

### Register:

[https://pub.cce.cornell.edu/event\\_registration/main/events\\_landing.cfm?event=spring2025NYAPsocialmedia201\\_203](https://pub.cce.cornell.edu/event_registration/main/events_landing.cfm?event=spring2025NYAPsocialmedia201_203)

**Cost:**  
**\$25.00**



## Farm Taxes: What to Know

CCE Delaware Office



Understanding tax code updates and preparing your information for tax season.

Early Bird Sessions

Innovative Ag Technology, Connor Young, WAC  
Learn about new opportunities coming soon from the Watershed Ag Program

Swipe, Sell, Succeed Panel, Ryan Nethery, Upland Farm, Dawn Perry D&D Farm  
Learn how a Point-of-Sale (POS) system can streamline your farm's direct-to-consumer sales.

Beyond the Bacon: Starting your Small Scale Pork Operation, Adam McFarland, Top Notch Livestock

Adam will discuss the basics of feeder pig selection and requirements to get a finished hog with quality meat.

Lunch Session

What is a Local Food System & Am I apart of it, Cheryl Bilinski, CCE-Harvest NY

Cheryl will help us understand what a Local Food System means and how all farms and consumers fit.



Scan Here To Register

Grazing Sessions

Improving Pasture Quality & Productivity, Sarah Flack-Sarah Flack Consulting

Sarah will dig into common pasture problems and ways to create higher yielding pastures with better nutritional quality.

Grazing from the Livestock Perspective, Sarah Flack-Sarah Flack Consulting

Sarah will discuss design & management of grazing systems to achieve meeting high nutrition demands from pasture.



Grazing Equipment: A Hands-on Experience, Dan Vredenburgh, Ben Hepler, WAC

After a short introduction of grazing equipment, you will have the opportunity to go to three stations to have your hand on grazing equipment.

Dairy Sessions

Farm Financial Fitness, Andy Gilbert, NY Farm Net

Learn key attributes to successful record keeping & tax planning.



Strategies to Maximize Forages in your Feed Program, Don Burkard-Dairy NEXt

Don Burkard will present how to monitor and improve the quality of our forage



Empowering Cows with Automated Health Monitoring, Julio Giordano-Cornell University

Dr Giordano will share practical applications of available automated health monitoring systems.

Livestock Sessions

Animal Behavior and Handling Systems, Dirk Schubert, Hession Hill Farm

Dirk will explain the science behind animal behavior



Selecting Replacement Females for your Herd or Flock, Ashley McFarland, CCE

Ashley will cover what makes a good replacement female and nutrition/feed management strategies.



Is Creep Feeding Right for Your Operation?

A panel of three local farmers will explain the why and how of creep feeding on their operations.

Cut Flowers Sessions

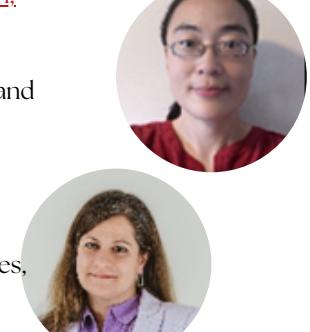
Marketing Great Flowers, Selling to Florist, Jess Beretz, Farmhouse Floral Design

We will discuss how to properly harvest and market your flowers to desired audience



Soil Health & Nutrient Management, Jingjing Yin, CCE Capital Area Ag & Hort. Program

This presentation will cover the concept of soil health, different ways of improving soil health and how to interpret soil test results, and nutrient management for cut flowers.



Lavender 101, Monica Cutillo-Cody, Owner of Farmstead 1868

Learn about all things lavender! The history, uses, benefits and different varieties.



# Healthy Individuals Equal Successful Farm Business

by Dr. Sharon Danes, Professor Emeritus, Dept of Family Science, University of Minnesota



Have you come to the end of a long day and still felt guilty about not working harder and longer? Have you felt guilty about not spending more time with your family and friends but kept working? Have you worked long hours but wondered whether you were making any progress?

If any or all of these are common in your life, ask yourself if you feel that your life is in balance. Many farmers believe their work is a seven-day-a-week, 365-day-a-year job. The health of the livestock and crops is critical to business productivity, but so is your health and your relationships with your family.

Research shows that those whose lives are in balance are healthier, and healthy individuals are more productive in their businesses. Time for regeneration (refueling your energy level) is important to your health. Vacations, of course, are a vital way to refuel, reduce stress, and energize family unity. So, however, is how we live each day.

This month we address this issue by answering three questions:

- Why is life balance important?
- How can we increase our life balance each day?
- What about a vacation?

## Why is life balance important?



Each of us finds balance in different ways. What one does to regenerate energy levels and reduce work stress differs for each person. It may mean developing a hobby, getting more exercise, involving yourself in school activities of your children, finding time alone as a couple, socializing with family or friends, or taking a vacation. In challenging times, as farmers experience every day, an unconscious voice often kicks in to say that there just isn't time for these activities. There is an unstated belief that if only one works harder, then problems will go away, and things will get better.

But it doesn't work that way. Not only do they not get better, the stress resulting from the long hours and unsolved problems starts to pile up. That pile-up often comes not just from the business but from the family as well, because there is little to no time remaining for the family.

## How can we increase our life balance each day?

Information and communication along with problem solving through shared decision making (among business members, with employees, and with agribusiness personnel) are critical factors for viable farm operations today. To do this well, you need energy – physical, mental, and emotional. Life balance creates a larger pool of energy from which to build a successful business.

Mini-Breaks are often the key to day-to-day life balance. We all need to develop habits that relieve the stress of work and create quality time away from work and with family and friends. Research shows that HOW you spend time with your family is at least as important as HOW MUCH time you spend.

Try some of the following:

- Schedule time during the day when all family members are together. Talk about the day. Ask each person to share one or two positives from their day – a new friend, an accomplishment, something learned, an exciting experience with an old friend

# Healthy Individuals Continued:

- Go for a walk. Don't look for weeds in the corn or problems with the beans. Listen to a bird sing, watch a butterfly flit by, marvel at a beautiful flower, or the quiet of the countryside.
- Read something you enjoy. You need not spend a long time. A chapter or a few pages a day really add up. A brief period of reading or reflection is important to many successful people.

## **What about a vacation?**

Maybe you've heard a story like this: "My dad always bragged that he didn't take a day off in 50 years. But after Mom died, he regretted that they never took that trip she dreamed of. He told me to be sure to get away with my family. I took his advice—and I'm glad I did."

You probably can think of a hundred reasons why you shouldn't take a vacation. Here are the reasons you should:

- Spend time with your family.
- Gain a clearer perspective on the business.
- Create memories with your family that last a lifetime.
- Develop confidence that this can be done again (you may be surprised at who steps up while you are gone).
- Reduce stress by focusing your energy elsewhere.
- Discover how other people live (you might even gain valuable insights about your farm business).

Part of the stress release of vacations is in the excitement and process of planning what to do. Remember, vacations don't always have to cost a lot. A contingency plan to manage something going wrong on the farm is necessary for the farm and for your ability to relax.

A 50-year-old farm family talks about how they viewed the barriers to taking a vacation:

"Every time we've taken a vacation, my husband feels better physically and mentally when we return. He's rested, and upbeat. But that also makes it hard to come back, sometimes, because we know what the workload is going to be like. What stops us from planning vacations isn't money, or people to fill in – because we have those, at least for the moment. It's this notion that we are indispensable, and no one else can do things quite as well when we're gone. Once we get beyond that, it's no problem!"

## **The take home message**

Research indicates that individuals who take time away from work are better family members and better businesspeople. Reflect and plan now to create alternatives that allow that to happen. But, most of all, make it become a reality soon. Remember no one on their deathbed says, "I wish I had spent more time working."



## Employment Updates

**Minimum Wage:** New York State minimum wage is now \$16.00 outside of New York City, Long Island and Westchester, which is \$17.00/hr.

**Overtime Threshold:** As part of the Overtime Threshold step down phase in, farm employees are eligible for overtime pay for hours worked in a workweek over 52 hours as of Jan 1, 2026. The Farm Employer Overtime Credit remains available to help farms adjust to increased overtime costs.

# PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

## The Importance of Record Keeping on Beef Farms

*Meghan Potter MS PFM Team Leader*

Watershed Agricultural Council  
nycwatershed.org



Effective record keeping is a crucial component of successful beef farming. Accurate records help ensure animal health, enhance food safety, and facilitate informed management decisions that contribute to the financial stability and profitability of the farm. Here are key benefits and considerations for maintaining precise records:

### **Why Keep Records?**

1. Animal Health and Food Safety: Records help track drug withdrawal times, ensuring a safe food supply and prevent antibiotic residues.
2. Financial Gains: Herds with comprehensive records can achieve top dollar at auctions, with buyers willing to pay a premium for well-documented cattle.
3. Regulatory Compliance: Record keeping assists in meeting Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) requirements and other regulatory standards.
4. Management and Planning: Accurate data supports better decision-making regarding calving schedules, breeding programs, and genetic progress.
5. Biosecurity and Traceability: In case of disease outbreaks, records aid in tracing visitor interactions and animal movements.

### **How to Keep Records**

- Start simple and gradually build a system that suits your farm's needs.
- Use tools ranging from basic notebooks to specialized software.
- Focus on compliance with mandatory regulations and practical benefits for your herd.

### **Key Records to Track**

- Animal Information: ID numbers, birthdates, breed, and color.
- Reproductive Data: Breeding dates, weaning dates, and pregnancy checks.
- Health and Treatments: Vaccinations, treatments, and any incidents requiring attention.
- Performance Metrics: Weights, body condition scores, and average daily gain (ADG).
- Farm Operations: Feed inventories, financial records, and pasture quality assessments.

### **Additional Metrics**

Consider tracking additional data that impacts your business specifically, such as calving intervals, mothering ability, and mortality and morbidity percentages, to further optimize farm operations.

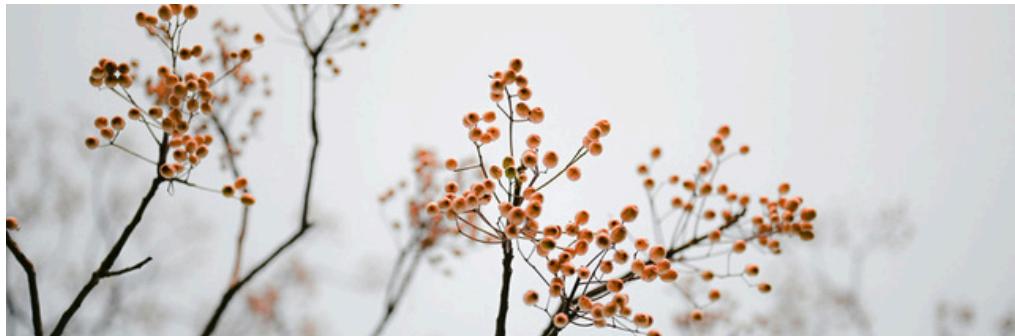
*By prioritizing record keeping, beef farmers can enhance their operational efficiency, meet compliance requirements, and maximize their economic returns.*



# FRUIT & VEG CORNER

## Winter Pruning Tips:

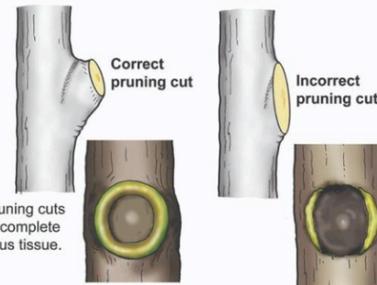
by Lila Shafer BT, Horticulturist



Winter is a great time for pruning because trees and shrubs are dormant. Most trees have dropped their leaves, making it easier to see the branch structure and to identify which branches need to be removed.

Winter pruning allows you to remove dead wood and branches damaged by disease, insects, animals, or storms. It is also a good time to eliminate crossing or rubbing branches, which can create wounds and allow pests and diseases to enter the plant.

Pruning in winter improves airflow and allows more light to reach the remaining stems and branches. Increased light typically leads to more flowers, leaves, and fruit later in the growing season. Removing about one-third of the stems encourages healthy new growth and helps maintain the plant's shape.



Correct pruning cuts result in a complete ring of callus tissue.

Incorrect pruning cuts result in incomplete callus growth.



**These tips are adapted from guidance by the University of Michigan Extension with additional information from Cornell Cooperative Extension**

## Energy Corner

### Winter 2026 On-Farm Energy Efficiencies Webinar Series

Beginning in January 2026 and continuing through the winter months, Ag Energy NY will be hosting its first ever webinar series that addresses energy efficiencies within specific commodity sectors. These webinars will provide information and resources for producers within those sectors to help them make informed decisions to assist in addressing energy efficiencies in their operations. Sectors that will be covered in the series include maple, vegetables, livestock, and orchards / vineyards.



Additional webinars will be offered to provide general ag production energy efficiencies for other sectors as well. For the latest information, including dates / times and to register, go to the Ag Energy NY website at <https://agenergyny.org/upcoming-events/>.

Contact Sam Edel, Delaware County Community Energy Advisor 607-366-0833 x 3 or [se379@cornell.edu](mailto:se379@cornell.edu) for more information.

# CORNELL CONNECTIONS

## Being Prepared for Farm Emergencies: Start the New Year off Right

Desiree Keever, Ag Issues Leader with Snow Load information incorporated from Curtis A. Gooch, CU Senior Extension Associate Emeritus



As we turn the calendar to another year, it's a perfect time to reflect on how prepared we are for emergencies – and to take action where improvements are needed. Farm emergencies can take many forms: animals loose, machinery breakdowns, loss of power, barn fires, floods, heavy snow load barn collapses, and anything else mother nature sends our way. In the high-stress environment of an emergency, trying to "think through" responses on the fly often leads to suboptimal outcomes. That's why preparation matters.

### Review Your Insurance Coverage

One of the most overlooked aspects of farm emergency planning is having the right insurance coverage in place. Thinking we're adequately covered – only to find out too late that key exposures were uninsured or underinsured – in the face of an emergency adds a second layer of devastation. Don't let this happen to you! The start of a new year is an ideal time to:

- Review all existing policies – property, liability, equipment, livestock, business interruption, and specialty coverages.
- Check replacement values for buildings, machinery, and animals – make sure they reflect current costs.
- Confirm coverage limits and exclusions with your agent or broker – and adjust if necessary.

Consider attending the "I Thought I Was Covered for That" insurance course being offered, see page 3 for registration. This session is designed to help producers understand common gaps in farm insurance and how to tailor policies to your individual operation.

### Develop & Maintain an Emergency Plan

A well-thought-out emergency plan is your action guide when minutes count. In the chaos of a crisis, stress levels are high, and clear thinking is compromised – a pre-planned response provides a roadmap to help reduce confusion, improve safety, and limit losses. Key components of a strong emergency plan include:

- Emergency phone lists displayed prominently at all farm locations:
  - Local fire/EMS
  - Veterinarian
  - Equipment dealer/mechanics
  - Livestock haulers
  - Poison control
  - Key owners/managers
- Critical farm information readily accessible to responders:
  - Electrical disconnect locations
  - Chemical storage sites and hazard information
  - Other hazards unique to your farm
- Evacuation routes and procedures for people and animals
- Roles and responsibilities for everyone on the farm



Plans are only as good as their execution – so rehearse regularly with your team. Walk through scenarios such as fire, floods, or loss of power, and include animal handling steps like where animals would be moved and who would handle each task.



## Be Equipped and Trained

Emergencies often require immediate action:

- Install and maintain fire extinguishers around key areas of your farm.
- Make sure everyone on your property knows how to use them and are comfortable doing so.
- Know where the power shut off is, and how to disconnect.
- Have a generator? Make sure everyone knows how to operate it. Have it set up to automatically fire up in the event of a power outage? Make sure 1<sup>st</sup> responders and team have access to disconnect in the event of a fire or other emergency situation.

Have a plan for excavation equipment access in the case of a barn fire, this expedites overhaul and allows buried hotspots to be handled quickly to mitigate further damage and rekindles.

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- Have a plan for excavation equipment access in the case of a barn fire, this expedites overhaul and allows buried hotspots to be handled quickly to mitigate further damage and rekindles.

## Winter Hazards: Heavy Snow Loads on Barns

As we head into the depth of winter, another danger is heavy snow loads on farm structures. For an in-depth look at this information, check out Curtis Gooch's resource *Heavy Snow Loads & Do's and Don'ts for Barn Snow Removal* @ <https://eden.cce.cornell.edu/2025/12/04/heavy-snow-loads-dos-and-donts-for-barn-snow-removal/>. Keep in mind that a significant accumulation of snow can stress or even cause failure of barns and other agricultural buildings.

Here's what you need to know:

- Heavy snow can overload roofs beyond their design capacity, especially in older or non-engineered structures.
- Wood framed buildings often show tell-tale signs of stress, such as creaking, bowing rafters, or bent truss members – while metal buildings may fail without warning.
- Snow removal – if necessary – should only be done by trained, protected individuals following a systematic approach:
  - Work from the eaves toward the peak in balanced zones.
  - Avoid creating uneven loads, which can worsen the situation.
  - Remove snow from both sides of the barn as equally as possible
  - Do not allow deep piles to accumulate alongside walls which may also cause barn failure or interfere with ventilation.

These guidelines reinforce a broader theme: prevention and preparation save lives, animals, and property. Knowing how to assess structural risk and safely address heavy snow can prevent catastrophic losses and emergencies in the first place.

Emergencies don't wait for convenient times – but being prepared makes all the difference. Whether reviewing your insurance coverage, updating farm emergency plans, or staying aware of seasonal risks like heavy snow, taking action now will help keep your operation safe, resilient, and productive.

Wishing you a safe, healthy, and productive New Year!

# PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

## Set up Dry Cows for Success-Easy ways to Fix Fresh Cows in 2026

by Meghan Potter, MS PFM Team Leader

Watershed Agricultural Council  
nycwatershed.org



As dairy farmers, we have come a long way in terms of understanding how to feed and manage the dry cow. Prepartum dietary approaches are very effective at minimizing issues with hypocalcemia and improving postpartum performance. Goals of transition cow programs should include:

- High milk production
- Maintain BCS/minimize loss of BCS
- Low incidence of metabolic disorders like hypocalcemia
- Minimize loss of immunocompetence
- Control/decrease days to first ovulation and maintain/enhance fertility.
- Low stillborn rate and yielding healthy calves

High performing dairies can improve all of these by focusing on continuous, incremental advancements in all areas of transition cow management.

Prepartum dietary management is most effective way of preventing postpartum hypocalcemia. Dietary strategies for fresh cow success are:

- Manipulate dietary cation anion difference (DCAD)
- Minimize/avoid high potassium forages (legumes)
- Supplement anions (chloride and/or sulfur containing supplements)
- Actualize a low calcium diet through use of a binder of calcium in the diet to decrease absorption
- Synthetic Zeolite A or CalBal products can easily be added to the grain for a few weeks prior to calving.

**\*\*Ask your dairy nutritionist about calcium binders or setting up a DCAD diet for your prefresh cows today. These tools can be applied to your farm right away and start improving your fresh cow success.\*\***

# CORNELL CONNECTIONS

## New York and Vermont Corn Silage Hybrid Evaluation and Field Crop Performance Network – 2025 Results

by Dale Dewing, MS, CCA Watershed Program Leader



Corn silage is a vital crop for Delaware County. Choosing the best hybrids is an important part of growing a successful crop. Since Corn Silage is a key component of dairy and livestock diets, forage quality is as important as yield. Cornell and University and Vermont collaborate on corn silage variety trials each year to provide critical information for corn growers. In 2025 Cornell also began an on-farm corn performance program, looking at two corn hybrids at a field scale on multiple farms across NY State.

The full report (<https://blogs.cornell.edu/varietytrials/corn-silage/>) is worth reading and has lots of information for any corn grower.

A few thoughts to keep in mind while reading the report.

- Don't be seduced by long season hybrids. Longer season hybrids don't always yield better than shorter season ones. Look at the dry matter content in the yield chart, hybrids with high DMs harvested on the same day matured earlier than hybrids with lower DMs. A hybrid that will fully mature by mid-September on your farm will yield more, have a higher starch content, and will usually result in an easier harvest and a great opportunity to get a cover crop established. It may be true that we are experiencing later fall frosts, but the rate of growing degree accumulation after mid-September is very slow and sets up immature corn to multiple risks like more disease pressure and development of molds and mycotoxins.
- Fiber digestibility is valuable. Half the yield of corn silage comes from stems and leaves. Higher fiber digestibility means more energy from that fiber portion of the crop. Higher fiber digestibility hybrids usually had higher milk production potential.
- Local conditions matter. The same hybrids grown on seven farms across the State had a wide range of results when they experienced different conditions. Work with your seed supplier to find the best fit for your soils, heat accumulation, and disease risks.

[Scan QR code for full report](#)



# PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

## 4-H Carcass Eval Program Highlights Impacts of Management Decisions.

by Kaitlyn Conklin, 4-H Youth Development Community Educator

Every year there is excitement surrounding the Annual 4-H Livestock Auction, the culmination of the countless hours 4-H members spend caring for, fitting & training their beef, swine, meat goats, and sheep in preparation for their respective shows and the Auction. Did you know... 4-H Members continue to learn from their project animals and receive recognition even after the auction has ended?

This can be achieved through participation in the Carcass Evaluation program; once the animals have been processed (note: not all processing facilities participate in carcass evaluations), they are graded with USDA standards. This process recognizes 4-Hers who have raised and produced a great product and provides essential feedback on feeding/nutrition programs, herd health, genetics and overall animal performance.

### Examples of Beef



Prime



Choice +



Choice -



Select -

4-Hers can then adjust and consider best practices for future market animal projects and their farm management. The results from the carcass evaluations are explained by 4-H Community Educator Kaitlyn Conklin at the yearly Reviewing Fair Carcass Evaluation Results program providing clarification on results, highlighting areas where participants are excelling and where they can improve. The carcass evaluator took pictures of the carcasses evaluated, giving youth a rare visual comparison not many producers get the chance to see. These photos were used to show the difference in marbling, fat cover, and more.

A quick overview of the USDA grading includes evaluating the following carcass characteristics for each species:

Beef- Quality Grade, Yield Grade, Yield Percentage

Swine- Yield Grade, Degree of Muscling, Yield Percentage, Hanging Weight

Meat Goat- Selection, Leg Score, Hanging Weight, Yield Percentage

Sheep- Quality Grade, Yield Grade, Cutability, Yield Percentage

The USDA calculations can be utilized to determine the percentage of body weight that becomes usable product and can reveal over-feeding or under finished animals. Carcass grading also gives important insight into animal genetics, which can be helpful in determining future breeding selections going forward. For example, if an animal is lacking marbling, although they appeared to be finished or if the animal was not as strong structurally as they appeared, then that could be related to genetics and can be corrected, over time, with selective breeding.

Carcass evaluation also give insight into how youth are handling their animals. For example, if a youth "overshows" a swine or uses their show stick too heavily, it can leave marks on the animal that may or may not be visible depending on the animal's hide color but can be seen on the carcass itself. If these marks are deep enough, they can affect the overall quality of the meat as a result of the hemorrhaging in the tissue which can affect the tenderness and flavor of meat. This can be observed in other species as well. Adjustments such as changes in handling style, more time spent training/working with/desensitizing the animal or adjustment in equipment used is an easy fix to improve carcass results if this feedback is received.

The Carcass Evaluation and Review programs can help young producers strive for excellence and be successful in their market animal projects in the show ring and on the hook. Programs like these are a unique opportunity for Delaware County 4-H members, it is key all 4-H youth who participate in animal projects learn about best practices in raising their animals. These opportunities are making Delaware County's market animal program even stronger and are producing better quality animals for consumers.

# The Agritourism Brief

## Protecting Your Operation:

### 1 Legal Entity Types

Legal formation can help reduce liability. Research which structure will best suit your operation. Options include:

- Sole Proprietor
- Corporation
- Limited Liability Company (LLC)

### 4 Safety in Agriculture Tourism Act

Owners shall not be liable for injury or death if provision of GOL Section 18-303(1)(a)-(e) are met. Operators must still take reasonable care to prevent foreseeable risks. Things Required:

- Directional Signage
- Employee Training
- Warning Signs of Inherent Risks of Activities
- Written Information
- Visitor Responsibility Signs
- Right to Refunds

Posted in compliance with the act and utilizing the required language



### 2 Contracts/Event Contracts

Consider having a signed contract when hosting private events. Make sure to look at a few sample contracts before creating one & seek legal help with the process.

### 5 Different Types of Insurance Policies

**Occurrence Policy:** Protects the business from any covered incident that happened during the policy period even after the policy is cancelled.

**Claims- Made Policy:** If a claim occurs within a specific time period of the policy but the policy is canceled, or a premium isn't paid then any incident that occurred during that period isn't covered.

**Tail Coverage:** Can be purchased to extend the claims-made policy to protect policy holder from past incidents.

### 6 Know Your Insurance Policy

- Start & End Date
- Coverage Amount per Incident
- Max Coverage Amount per Year
- What is Covered and NOT Covered

Make sure to review the policy annually & update with any changes you've made to your operation.

### 7 Finding an Agent/Carrier

Find an agent/carrier that has the following:

- AM Best Rating
- Agent Access
- Credibility
- Referral
- Trust Instinct
- Knowledge of Your Risk
- Pricing clarity

### 8 Incident Reporting

What should I do if an accident occurs?

- Fill out an Incident Report (Date, Time, What Happened, People Present and their contact info)
- Make sure person injured signs the Incident Report
- If sued: Cease all communication with anyone about the incident except insurance company and attorney.
- Forward all paperwork to insurance agent.
- Do not discuss the incident or claims on social media.

Stay connect and continue learning with the **Agritourism Monthly Webinar Series**



## ASSISTANCE FOR FARMERS IMPACTED BY UNFAIR MARKET DISRUPTION - NEW USDA PROGRAM

Program Announced on December 8th - There is an upcoming opportunity for specialty crops!

USDA announced recently that they will make \$12 billion available as a 1 time "bridge payment" to farmers in response to temporary trade market disruptions and increased production costs. According to the USDA press release the investments in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA), including reference price increases of 10-21% for covered commodities like corn, soybeans, wheat will reach eligible growers in October 1, 2026.

As one could predict - \$11 billion will go to row crop farmers (Barley, chickpeas, corn, cotton, lentils, oats, peanuts, peas, rice, sorghum, soybeans, wheat, canola, flax, mustard, rapeseed, safflower, sesame, and sunflower). Farmers qualifying for payment under these crops can expect payments to be released by February 28th.

But do not despair if you are not on that list! The remaining \$1 billion will be distributed to commodities not covered in the list above, like specialty crops and sugar. Details including timelines for those payments are still under development.

# It's A New Year of Ag News, Don't Miss Out!

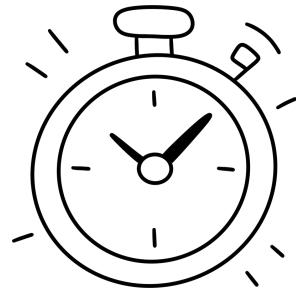
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