

Secretary's Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
January 27, 2021

Ag Education Professional Development – Kristianne Dowd and Erin Noble participated in virtual professional development focused on how to effectively implement Career and Technical Education programs in a virtual format. The conference, hosted by CASE (Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education), offered four tracks – CTE Instruction, Best Practices, Software & Apps, and Digital Equity – to meet the needs of all participants. The highlight of the conference was professor and author, John Spencer. He shared ideas and strategies for engaging students in distance learning. This experience provided tools to enhance the educational programming being offered virtually this year.

Emergency Preparedness Service Animal Working Group – The Animal Emergency Preparedness Service Animal Working Group has finalized three service animal emergency preparedness guidance documents. The individual documents outline emergency preparedness for handlers of service animals, provide shelter managers and OEM (Office of Emergency Management) directors with a checklist of shelter supplies for service animals, and provides considerations for service animals in a shelter during the COVID-19 pandemic. These documents are now posted in the NJ OEM document library and will be disseminated by NJDA's partners in disability and access and functional needs.

Gypsy Moth Program – Plant Industry Division staff has completed municipal gypsy moth egg mass surveys for the season. From the surveys, a total of 170 acres in two blocks located in Burlington and Cape May County have been proposed for treatment in the spring of 2021. One municipality in Burlington County opted not to participate on the program leaving 50 acres in Cape May County for treatment in May.

Livestock Processing – Many livestock producers are reporting long waits for processing times at current facilities. It appears that multiple producers are looking into the possibility of creating their own on-farm processing. Information has been sent to those looking into this type of processing to see if they want to undertake the task of building a USDA approved facility.

Child and Adult Care Food Program – As of January 14, 2021, 566 out of 595 Child and Adult Care Food Program institutions submitted program renewal applications and are approved to receive fiscal year 2021 program reimbursement. Additionally, 242 institutions and 544 facilities are utilizing one or more of the Child Nutrition COVID-19 waivers, which allows for program flexibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Aquaculture – Agricultural and Natural Resources Division staff met with staff from the State Agriculture Development Committee to discuss applicability of right to farm protections for the shellfish aquaculture industry. Shellfish aquaculture is primarily conducted within State waters. Land-based infrastructure and right to farm are on the agenda.

Organic Certification – Marketing and Development Division employees are completing work on organic certifications and in-house field inspectors are conducting inspections via the modified protocol of reviewing documents prior to doing on-site visits. Training continues to take place to train more in-house staff to do organic inspections. Other staff are being trained to complete organic certification packets for handlers and producers. The organic section is also switching filing forms over to electronic versions of the forms in order to modernize the packet submission process.

Live Bird Marketing System – During the month of December, animal health technicians (AHTs) conducted unannounced inspections at 30 registered New Jersey live bird markets and sampled nine markets for avian influenza by sampling poultry. This includes two markets that underwent additional weekly follow up

inspections. Additional activity during the month of December included: The quarterly closure of 11 live bird markets. Quarterly closures consist of cleaning and disinfecting the entire market followed by a minimum of 24 hours of “down-time.” Following the “down-time,” environmental samples are taken at the market for testing. Staff inspected 10 poultry distributors, which included: records being reviewed, ensuring compliance with 2:9-4.2(c), reviewing vehicle cleaning and disinfection logbooks. Staff also tested poultry and seven distributors, including any poultry being delivered to live bird markets at the time of inspection. There were 17 backyard flocks throughout New Jersey tested for avian influenza.

School Nutrition Program – Food and Nutrition Division staff have initiated processes to compile data and create the Congressional Report reflecting the number of meals served during the pandemic under the Seamless Summer Option (SSO).

Feed, Fertilizer and Lime Review – The Plant Laboratory received 121 labels of feed, fertilizer and liming materials for Brand Approval for 2020. The plant laboratory reviewed all 121 labels using the Agricultural Chemistry Program (N.J.S.A. 4:9-15.1 et seq.) to protect farmers and consumers. This reduces the amount of misbranded and deficient products offered for sale. The results were updated on the USA Plant database.