

**Secretary's Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture**  
**February 24, 2021**

**On-Farm Dairy Processing** – On-farm dairy processing continues to advance with multiple farms at various stages of planning and construction. One on-farm processor was approved this month and has been approved for Grade A processing of fluid milk. Other farms have plans ready to submit to the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH), which is also short-staffed due to retirements and hiring freezes. NJDA staff are working with NJDOH on the plans and label approvals.

**Nursery Inspection Program Collaboration** – A member of the Plant Industry Division's Nursery Inspection Program is collaborating with colleagues from states across the country on a national meeting of the Central, Western, Southern, and Eastern Horticulture Inspection Society Chapters (HIS). Each region will be presenting to their national counterparts during this meeting to discuss plant pest concerns from within their region and those of concern from outside of their region. The goal of this national meeting is to become more familiar and harmonious among all state regulatory agencies as well as facilitate their activities governing the domestic nursery trade. The meeting(s) are to occur throughout the month of July 2021.

**Rowan Mapping Project** – Agricultural and Natural Resources Division staff is working with Rowan University on the upcoming soil productivity mapping interface. A beta version of the interface has been released for internal review. A June 2021 release date is anticipated. For background, Rowan University has contracted with the SADC and NJDA as part of a larger mapping project to make this updated information readily available and accessible to the public and municipal officials who can use this information for farmland assessment soil evaluation.

**Contagious Equine Metritis Program** – Faced with a winter weather event affecting the entire state and causing two consecutive days of state offices being close, the Division of Animal Health (DAH) and the Animal Health Diagnostic Lab (AHDL) staff collaborated to ensure the Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM) sample integrity and process was maintained. From January 31 to February 3, 2021, the winter storm impacted the schedule of sample collection and laboratory culture interpretation. Through coordination between DAH, AHDL, the CEM quarantine facilities, and the attending veterinarians, the CEM program was sustained, resulting in no impactful changes to a mare's quarantine schedule.

**Food Distribution** – The Food and Nutrition Division's food distribution team has been working on the commodities selections program roll out. During the month of February into early March, the team works with the school districts to assist them in their program diversions for School Year 21-22. The schools have the option to select from three USDA Programs – processed commodities, USDA Foods and/or Direct Delivery Fresh Department of Defense.

**2021 Honey Show** – The New Jersey Beekeepers Association Honey Show occurred in Parsippany in late January and went very smoothly. There were fewer entries than some prior years, however this was expected due to COVID-19. The winning entries will not be on display at the State Annex due to COVID-19. They will be auctioned off through an online meeting. The rest of the entries were returned to local branches to be displayed at various local venues such as municipal buildings and libraries.

**Shellfish Aquaculture Right to Farm** – Agricultural and Natural Resources Division staff continue to work on identifying potential gaps in the Right to Farm laws and regulations that may preclude the shellfish aquaculture industry from eligibility. This is due to the unique nature of the industry and not a critique on the right to farm protections afforded in NJ. Shellfish aquaculture needs land- and water-based facilities, neither of which is required to individually be five acres for industry purposes.

**Commodity Inspection and Grading** – Marketing and Development Division commodity inspection and grading staff are continuing all regular duties, which include: Conducting all requested USDA Terminal Market and Shipping Point inspections (average of 300 per month); scheduling and conducting USDA on-farm Third Party Audits; conducting 2021 FDA contract assignments; conducting requested on-farm fertilizer inspections; collecting animal feed samples (50 per month); updating Animal Feed, Produce Safety, and Organic Inventories; developing SOP's for the Produce Safety grant; preparing aggregate data for the Produce Safety Grant; preparing risk evaluations; delivering Produce Safety educational programs to growers; working with NASDA on Produce Safety Standards; preparing documentation for a work plan for the FDA Animal Feed Regulatory Program Standards (AFRPS) grant; scheduling and conducting Organic inspections; working on 2021 FDA Animal Feed Contract Assignments; and participating in numerous meetings with the FDA concerning AFRPS and Produce Safety Grants.

**Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory Testing** – The Pathology Laboratory Section for the month of January 2021 completed a total of 508 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 animal), private food and companion animal owners, NJ State Agencies, racetrack, wildlife, zoo, 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 ruminant, companion animal, 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.

**School Nutrition Program** – The Food and Nutrition Division school nutrition team has completed the second week of Seamless Summer Option Technical Assistance Reviews. Weekly staff meetings are held on Friday mornings to review the successes and challenges of each School Food Authority operating under the “Nationwide Waiver to Allow Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option Operations through School Year 2020-2021.”