

**Secretary's Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture**  
**May 26, 2021**

**Jersey Fresh** – Marketing and Development Division staff is continuing outreach to develop new marketing opportunities in the immediate marketing area and have been attending Food Export USA meetings to establish a stronger presence. Staff are shipping and delivering point-of-purchase materials to retailers, writing articles, continuing to publish and disseminate Jersey Fresh social media updates and revising the FindJerseyFresh.com website.

**Animal Emergency Working Group (AEWG) Symposium** – The Division of Animal Health conducted the 2021 AEWG Virtual Symposium via Microsoft Teams. Thirty attendees joined the event representing numerous County Animal Rescue Teams (CARTs) and county offices of emergency management, in addition to members of NJ State Animal Response Team. The State Public Health Veterinarian presented basic information regarding the current COVID-19 pandemic and how it is an example of the importance of appropriate biosecurity practices. A variety of biosecurity practices must be implemented in CART pet shelters to ensure the safety of the animals and humans. The animal emergency preparedness coordinator discussed the recommended CART shelter guidelines for congregate sheltering in a pandemic environment. A guest speaker from the NJ Department of Human Services Disaster & Terrorism Branch spoke about physiological first aid and mental health awareness. The topic of physiological first aid was particularly well-reviewed by the attendees.

**Soil Conservation** – NJDA engineering staff continue to provide support to Soil Conservation Districts and the regulated public, both remotely as well as through field visits. This month staff has provided assistance on approximately 27 different site plan applications including a very large wet land restoration of the Teaneck Creek Park. This project involves the removal of 100 percent of the existing vegetation, much of which is invasive, and re-establishing native species. The entire flood plain park was stripped of vegetation and has been regraded to create pools and small diversion channels and is being replanted this spring with specialized plants and techniques.

**School Nutrition** – The Food and Nutrition Division School Nutrition Program unit is preparing to initiate all procedures and requirements for participants during the new School Year 2021-22, which launches on July 1. Training sessions and the proper Agreement and Policy are being updated in the system for School Food Authorities to apply.

**Bees for Blueberries** – Bees have moved into blueberries from Maryland, Florida, New Jersey, and New York State. There were an estimated 15,000 colonies moved into the state for blueberry pollination. It was a short pollination season as the weather was warm and dry. Most of the colonies looked relatively healthy.

**Emergency Operating Costs for Feeding Programs** – Implementation plans for Emergency Operating Costs for National School Lunch and Child and Adult Care Food Program have been submitted to the USDA. The reimbursements under this program will provide additional funding for local Child Nutrition Program operators whose revenues declined or were interrupted during the early months of the pandemic due to COVID-19 related restrictions and closures. Upon receipt of this funding, payments will be disbursed using formula-calculated payments to eligible program operators. The amount of the anticipated funding to be received is approximately \$40 million for New Jersey.

**New FFA Chapter** – New Jersey FFA welcomed a new middle school FFA chapter – Montague Township in Sussex County. Montague Township School in Montague is a K-8 school district. State FFA Officers conducted a chapter installation ceremony and met with several students of the chapter. The chapter

has 25 members who are eager to reap the benefits of leadership development and career preparation that FFA provides.

**Tissue Processor for Animal Health Diagnostic Lab** – The Animal Health Diagnostic Lab’s new tissue processor was installed in the histology laboratory. A tissue processor chemically processes animal tissues as a prerequisite to prepare slides for examination by a veterinary pathologist. The old tissue processor was at its end of life and was performing sub-optimally, leading to unacceptable slide quality. The new tissue processor produces quality slides for the pathologist’s examination contributing to animal and public health protection in New Jersey. The tissue processor was paid with lab fee revenues and cost \$100,000.

**Nursery Inspection Program** – The Plant Industry Division issued 30 state phytosanitary certificates for domestic shipments of 32,073 bare-rooted and potted plants, 32,256 ornamental flower seeds, and 34,460 dormant bulbs for shipment to California, Illinois, Minnesota, Nevada, Oregon, Puerto Rico, and Washington State. Staff also performed 30 federal phytosanitary inspections on 28 shipments of 1,108,553 dormant flower bulbs, rooted trees, and shrubs to Canada, and 40 fig cuttings to Japan.

**Dairy** – The Marketing and Development Division’s dairy unit is reporting that on-farm processing continues to be advanced with multiple farms at various stages of planning and construction. 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. Work with NJDOH on the plans and label approvals was also conducted.