

Secretary's Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
May 24, 2023

Emergency Planning and Preparedness – The 25th Annual Animal Emergency Working Group (AEWG) Symposium was held on Monday, May 8 at the Horse Park of New Jersey. This was the first in-person AEWG symposium event since 2019. The training consisted of an interactive instructional session from the event's guest speaker, Eric Thompson, in the first part of the day. The afternoon offered participants practical demonstrations on the basic behavior and handling of horses, goats, rabbits, poultry, dogs, and cats. The Horse Park of NJ served as an ideal venue, both in facility infrastructure and its central location within the state. The NJDA was thrilled to host 81 attendees, which included members of County Animal Response Teams, State Animal Response Teams, County Emergency Response Teams, County Office of Emergency Management Teams, Accountable Care Organizations, and law enforcement. Eric Thompson is a leading subject matter expert in animal response, rescue, and emergency management. He guided the participants in an exercise that presented a series of potential incidents and responses that could happen in our state. Mr. Thompson is a particularly engaging and knowledgeable instructor within the field of animal emergency response. The NJDA was very fortunate to be able to facilitate his travel and lodging from out of state so that he could provide his expert leadership during the training. Numerous course evaluations have been submitted and reflect very positive feedback on the event, along with a variety of notable ideas on topics for next year's symposium.

Nursery Inspections – Plant Industry Division staff conducted trace work with USDA APHIS PPQ at the request of the USDA to collect samples from plants that may have been infected with *Phytophthora ramorum*. These plants were shipped from a nursery in California in a county under Federal Quarantine. The samples collected from the plants that entered New Jersey were tested and found to be free of *P. ramorum*. Additional trace forward investigations were conducted for *P. ramorum* that were sold online and shipped to several states including two shipments to New Jersey. Inspectors visited the residences that received these plants, collected samples, and submitted them to the approved diagnostic laboratory for testing. The NDJA is awaiting the test results.

FindJerseyFresh.com Update – Marketing and Development Division staff is working with OIT and a vendor to relaunch the FindJerseyFresh.com website through a new provider. The vendor portal will debut later this summer, which will allow farmers and farmers markets to update their information directly into the system.

School Nutrition Program – Food and Nutrition Division specialists participated in a staff meeting to discuss upcoming summer projects, goals for upcoming months, and to ensure they are on track to complete administrative reviews. The unit offered Seamless Summer Option webinars, then opened the application for the program on May 8. All webinars are recorded and available for participants to review as necessary. The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program application for School Year 2023-2024 was recently made available to participants via our online system. Additionally, staff prepared and offered two webinars (one for newcomers and one for returning participants) about Community Eligibility on May 11.

FFA National Officer Visit – New Jersey FFA had a surprise visit from National FFA Western Region Vice President Ryan Williamson at the end of April. Travel disruptions found Ryan stranded in New Jersey for a few days so National FFA and State FFA staff kicked into gear and planned visits for him throughout the state. Ryan started his adventures with the Cape May Tech FFA Chapter. He also visited the Woodstown FFA and Salem Tech FFA Chapters, and the Northern Burlington FFA and Allentown FFA Chapters. The visits consisted of tours of the agriculture facilities, workshops with students, meetings with administration, and opportunities to show Ryan what makes each program unique. Ryan is one of

six National FFA Officers serving more than 850,000 in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Farm To School – The Food and Nutrition Division’s Farm to School team completed its spring workshops on Sustainable Pathways in Farm to School. The workshops included an overview of Farm to School implementation through the classroom, cafeteria, and community. Farm to School collaborated with the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to highlight locally grown and how to incorporate them into the cafeteria and classroom. The workshops also included partnerships with several different stakeholders including local farms, schools, educators, non-profit farms, and health and wellness collaboratives. Over 100 educators and food service directors learned together during the workshops on how to implement a whole school initiative in Farm to School. Farm to School will be providing ongoing technical assistance and support for participants in the workshops.

Lymantria Dispar Dispar (LDD – formerly known as Gypsy Moth) Treatments – A total of 5,327 acres of state and residential municipal properties in Burlington, Cape May and Ocean counties were planned for treatment for LDD during the month. Of this number, 1,221 acres in eight blocks are recommended to be treated a second time due to the large numbers of eggs in the blocks. The program began May 8 where a total of 1,252 acres were treated in Middle and Dennis Townships, Cape May County. All treatments in the Burlington County blocks were scheduled for the week of May 15 because of poor larval hatch and foliage development. To date, a total of 4,198 acres in Cape May and Burlington counties have been treated.

Necropsy Examinations and Pathology Testing – The Division of Animal Health’s Pathology Laboratory Section for the month of April 2023 completed a total of 156 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 animals), private food and companion animal owners, NJ State Agencies, racetracks, 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 ruminants, companion animals, and 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.

Farm Preservation Assistance – Agricultural and Natural Resources Division staff performed a joint visit with a member of the Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board to a farm that is interested in term or permanently preserving their farm and utilizing state cost share funds available to term or permanently preserved farms to address drainage and ponding issues in their crop field. NJDA staff created maps for the farm and met with the landowners to discuss the preservation process and current cropping practices in place on the farm.

Dairy Business Innovation Center Grants – Marketing and Development Division staff have distributed Dairy Business Innovation (DBIC) grant opportunities to various operations that could apply if they so desire. One larger DBIC Grant has been applied for which could incorporate a Jersey Fresh milk item. The grant application was for equipment needed to segregate milk at the processing plant.