

## Secretary's Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture

April 28, 2021

**Jersey Fresh** – The weekly Jersey Fresh Availability Report resumed publication on April 19 and will be published each Monday throughout the season. Marketing and Development staff are also 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 Health Diagnostic Lab Accreditation** – The Animal Health Diagnostic Lab applied for ISO 17025 accreditation renewal, including a new field, chemistry analyses, in the Plant Industry Laboratory. The next step is scheduling a virtual audit with an auditor assigned by the accreditation organization, American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA). The laboratory staff is routinely engaged in activities to ensure successful audit and accreditation.

**Ag Education** – Program Leader, Agricultural Education/State FFA Advisor Erin Noble participated in a panel during an event hosted by Rutgers University. “Agriculture Science: It’s more than just dirt!” was an opportunity for Rutgers students to hear from experts, professors, and students about the potential for a career in agriculture that can help shape the future of the world. Topics included agricultural careers in science, technology, business, education, nutrition, and communication. Erin specifically addressed teaching agriculture as a career option.

**School Nutrition** – The Food and Nutrition Division continues to perform technical assistance visits throughout the State. There have been 246 technical assistance virtual visits. The observations have resulted in training recommendations and overviews of the program requirements, others have required immediate actions. Some School Food Authorities have done such an exemplary job that they were highlighted for their best practices in the first School Nutrition Honors Newsletter.

**Honeybee Testing** – Two honeybee samples were received via mail by the Plant Laboratory this month. The laboratory screens for two major honeybee pests: Varroa destructor, an arachnid in the tick family that externally parasitizes honeybees, and Nosema ceranae, a microsporidian disease that infects the stomach lining of the bees and causes an illness that presents much like dysentery. Both samples were clear of Nosema, but one of the samples had a high concentration of Varroa per 100 bees. If Nosema or Varroa levels are high in a colony, the bees can be more susceptible to other, more serious diseases and more sensitive to other environmental stressors.

**Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)** – The Food and Nutrition Division assisted the NJ YMCA State Alliance (YAlliance) in developing a “Healthy Kids Healthy Futures CACFP Promotional Flyer.” This flyer was developed by the YAlliance in an effort to assist the State Agency in identifying CACFP Early Child Care participation gaps and identify current participation decreases as compared to pre-pandemic participation levels. The YAlliance also plans to use the data collected to provide support and technical assistance to Early Child Care Centers throughout New Jersey.

**New Jersey Shellfish Aquaculture and Right to Farm** – Agricultural and Natural Resources Division staff continues to have discussions on right to farm protections for shellfish aquaculture farming operations. Shellfish aquaculture is primarily conducted within State waters, but with the need for land-based infrastructure. The current right to farm program was not developed specific to the unique operation of a shellfish aquaculture farm. Staff are working to determine if there are ways to improve the program for this sector.

**Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease** – The Division of Animal Health and the USDA conducted a foreign animal

disease investigation on a sudden death rabbit case. The presence of Rabbit Hemorrhagic disease in several states justifies the testing. Rabbit hemorrhagic disease is a fatal disease in rabbits and is classified as a foreign animal disease in the United States. In February 2020, animal health officials detected rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus serotype 2 (RHDV2) for the third time in the United States, since 2018. Since that detection, RHDV2 has spread to multiple states across the Southwest. RHDV2 does not impact human health.

**Mile-A-Minute Program** – The Phillip Alampi Beneficial Insect Lab is rearing the Mile-a-minute defoliator, *Rhinoncomimus latipes*, at peak levels to prepare for shipments beginning in May. In addition, adult weevils that were stockpiled through the winter are being acclimated at room temperature. These adults will be used to supplement current production and summer field releases.

**Dairy** – The Marketing and Development Division’s dairy unit is continuing work with the NJ Department of Health (NJDOH) regarding various shippers sending milk to processors without the processor having an established Bulk Tank Unit (BTU) defined. Contact continues with the processors identified by NJDOH as receiving milk directly from producers. Processors are being educated on the licensing, and bonding regulations.