

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

March 22, 2023

FFA Horticultural Exposition – Students from 21 middle and high schools throughout the state displayed their floral and horticultural talent in the New Jersey FFA Horticultural Exposition at Mercer County Community College on March 10-11. More than 600 entries were on display throughout the two days. Best of Division winners were: Horticulture Division – Ashley Castro, Monmouth County FFA (Magical Miniature Garden); Permanent Division – Jason Wilson, Monmouth County FFA (Father's Day); Fresh Division – Gabriel Weaver, Bankbridge Regional FFA (Harvest Festival); and Adult Division – Patty Smith, Warren Hills FFA (Advisor's Folly). Fifty-six students competed in the on-site Floral Design Career Development. The Phillipsburg FFA Chapter placed first in the event. Twenty-eight industry representatives served as judges throughout the entire event.

Necropsy Examinations and Pathology Testing – The Division of Animal Health's Animal Health Diagnostic Lab (AHDL) completed 238 tests and/or procedures in February. Tests and/or procedures involved gross necropsy examination, histopathologic (microscopic), immunohistochemical, and parasitological preparation and evaluation, and these cases generated additional diagnostic tests for their laboratory sections (e.g., bacteriology, virology, and molecular). Results from these case submissions help 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.

Spotted Lanternfly – Plant Industry Division spotted lanternfly (SLF) staff have been scraping and crushing overwintering egg masses. To date for 2023, the SLF team has destroyed nearly 180,000 egg masses as crews scraped egg masses at 69 properties in February. Before treatments can occur at a particular location, the SLF field teams must secure permission by getting property owners to sign a treatment agreement. This month, 12 new permissions were secured. Properties where permission for treatment is secured need to be further assessed for the presence of the tree of heaven. During this reporting period a total of 15 properties were assessed.

Farm to School Program – The Food and Nutrition Division's Farm to School Coordinator is planning for its upcoming spring workshops titled Farm to School and Sustainable Pathways. The workshop will include a day of hands-on learning about agriculturally sustainable practices in the classroom and how to increase local food in program meals. The workshops also will include an overview of Farm to School implementation through the classroom, cafeteria, and community.

Commodity Grading and Inspections – Marketing and Development Division commodity inspection and grading staff are conducting all requested USDA terminal market and shipping point inspections with an average of 350 per month. Staff is also scheduling and conducting USDA on-farm third party audits, collecting animal feed and fertilizer samples (80 per month), updating animal feed and produce safety inventories, verifying qualified exempt farms for produce safety rule, developing SOP's for produce safety grant, and verifying produce safety farm inventory with in-person visits.

Live Bird Marketing System – During February, animal health technicians (AHTs) conducted unannounced inspections at 23 registered NJ live bird markets and sampled poultry from 11 markets for avian influenza. An AHT also attended the Live Bird Market Working Group Meeting in Tucson, Ariz.

Topics included the current state of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) internationally as well as domestically. State representatives presented incidents that occurred in their states with regard to HPAI. National Poultry Improvement Program representatives gave an update as well as the USDA with regard to cooperative agreements, indemnity for HPAI cases, and disposal methods. Additional activities included the quarterly closure of 17 live bird markets. Quarterly closures consist of cleaning and disinfecting the entire market followed by a minimum of 24 hours of “downtime.” Following the “downtime,” environmental samples are taken for testing.

Lymantria Dispar Dispar – Plant Industry Division staff have completed all municipal *lymantria dispar dispar* (LDD – formerly known as gypsy moth) egg mass ground surveys for the season. Overall, a total of 5,327 acres of state and residential municipal properties in Burlington, Cape May and Ocean counties surveyed during the spring were recommended for treatment. 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. Staff continue to work with the participating municipalities to ensure they have completed all of their requirements prior to the beginning of treatment activities.

Manure Link Development – Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources staff hosted a kick-off meeting with the Rutgers Office of Research Analytics (ORA) to discuss the Manure Link website layout. ORA shared with the division that potential layout options are similar to the SADC NJ Land Link yet improved based on the experience of hosting the website for several years. Data input for the NJ ManureLink website is scheduled to be provided to Rutgers ORA by the end of March. A fully executed MOA from the NJ Compost Council (NJCC) to begin work with the NJDA on the ManureLink website was secured in late January and staff from the Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources hosted a kick-off meeting with NJCC in mid-February to discuss the NJ ManureLink website layout and resources. Comments on the initial website mock-up have been received by staff to update the layout and meet the suggestions provided.

Child and Adult Care Food Program – The Food and Nutrition Division’s Child and Adult Care Food Program Coordinator met virtually with members of the Department of Human Services for the purpose of assisting the Division in outreach to day care programs throughout the state. Division staff provided a walkthrough of the online application and reviewed the required records necessary for submission and approval to the CACFP. The Division’s CACFP staff will be meeting with them on a regular basis moving forward.

Livestock Processing – Marketing and Development Division staff continues to work on the livestock project including having discussions between the groups and potential funding sources at the State and Federal level. The Department is assisting any processor group or processor in obtaining federal grants that their operation may be eligible for. Staff members are also watching for additional funding to assist all producers.