

Secretary's Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
October 23, 2019

Agricultural Marketing – October has been highlighted by Marketing and Development staff efforts on agricultural marketing and economic development projects. These included: 1) Coordinating a Jersey Fresh display and interacting with food retailers and their supplier partners at the New Jersey Food Council's "Good Government" Breakfast; 2) Continuing to update the region's produce industry via the weekly "Jersey Fresh Availability & Forecast Report;" 3) Participating in a second meeting with representatives of the New Jersey Department of Health and influential New Jersey direct marketers related to the Minimum Food Safety Requirements for Product Sales at Farm Markets and Community Farm Markets; 4) Responding to several inquiries to the "New Jersey Farm Market Guidelines" inbox from citizens who were trying to start food related businesses or striving to sell their agricultural products at New Jersey community farmers markets; 5) Continuing to market the New Jersey apple industry harvest season via social media efforts and also assisting apple growers in the marketing of their off-grade products.

Spotted Lanternfly Survey – NJDA and USDA field staff continued survey efforts as part of the Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) Program. Currently survey staff are responding to phone and email reports of SLF throughout the state. Survey crews are visiting sites where SLF has been reported to determine if populations are present at each location. Positive/negative locations are marked in a program called Arc Collector. In addition to the eight SLF quarantine counties (Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Hunterdon, Mercer, Salem, Somerset and Warren) the pest has now been confirmed in Union, Essex, Hudson and Morris counties. Additional finds in Monmouth, Atlantic and Sussex counties consisted of single insects and not populations, and therefore these counties are not yet considered to be positive. Pesticide applications continued in September around the Port of Elizabeth/Newark, the Port of Gloucester and Petty Island in Pennsauken to safeguard those locations from any infestations of this invasive insect. To date, over 13,783 acres have been treated on 414 parcels throughout the state.

Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources (FANR) Education Professional Development Conference – The 2019 Fall Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) Education Professional Development Conference focused on "Getting Back to Basics" and welcomed more than 50 teachers and guests. Ag teachers participated in a full day of workshops including topics about Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE) for All, New and Emerging Trends in Agriculture, Philosophy of Agricultural Education and the Value of Membership in Professional Organizations. Participants heard updates from Secretary Fisher (industry update); David McNair (CTE update); Thomas Leustek (Rutgers update) and Kristianne Dowd (FFA update). Growing Leaders motivational speaker Andrew McPeak provided the audience with tools for working with this generation of students.

Summer Food Service Sponsor Meeting – The end of summer operations sponsor debriefing was held on October 10th at the Division of Food and Nutrition office. It was attended by existing and new sponsors, Secretary Fisher, the Division Director, unit staff and staff from the regional USDA office. Sponsors had the opportunity to share successes and challenges and express thoughts on how the state agency can provide additional technical assistance and guidance in 2020.

Pathology Laboratory Testing – The Animal Health Diagnostic Lab's Pathology Laboratory Section for the month of September 2019 completed a total of 450 tests and/or procedures. Tests and/or procedures involved gross necropsy examination, histopathologic (microscopic), and parasitological preparation and evaluation. Species submitted for testing in the month of September 2019 included equine, ovine,

caprine, alpaca, canine, feline, domestic poultry/backyard birds, marine mammals, zoo/exotic and wildlife species. Cases for these months 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.

Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Inspections – By the end of November, the Marketing and Development Division will have conducted more than 100 on-farm FSMA Produce Safety inspections, more than any state in the country and well above the original goal of 75 inspections in year one. Next year, education-oriented inspections will begin for the next tier of covered farms (\$250k+ - \$500k in gross sales annually). Kudos to Chris Kleinguenther, Bureau Chief for the Bureau of Commodity Inspection and Grading, and his team for their industry leading work on this important issue.

Nursery Inspection Program – Fall inspections took place at five of New Jersey's largest blueberry nursery stock producers during September to complete their 2019 certification. These nurseries reside in Atlantic and Burlington Counties. Division staff inspected 1,163,828 blueberry plants at eight locations, (34,004 mother plants, 616,591 nursery plants, 509,339 cuttings & 894 containers). A total of 1,153 plants were rejected & destroyed due to disease; three plants displayed symptoms of stunt virus, 1,106 ring-spot virus, and 44 Dodder infestations were found. There was a significant increase in the incidence of Ring-spot virus from last year, however this was due to a high level of incidents on one individual farm.

National School Lunch Week, Farm to School Month – During October, the School Nutrition Program celebrates National School Lunch Week. Unit representatives joined Secretary Fisher to highlight Sampson G. Smith Middle School at Franklin Township on Thursday, October 17. October is also National Farm to School Month and the Farm to School Coordinator is in the process of doing several planned visits to farms and schools to capture all that's happening this month.

Vector-Borne Disease Working Group – An Animal Health Division staff veterinarian attended the vector-borne disease working group meeting on September 25. Other individuals represented several other state departments, Rutgers, mosquito control, and the public health sector. The Department of Health (DOH) discussed a disease surveillance plan in Sussex County as a response to the three Powassan cases in humans. The department is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to implement a plan of data collection from 300 random households in Sussex County. Information on the individual's recent health and a blood sample will be collected. The project will begin in early October and run for approximately three weeks. A DOH epidemiologist described this year's finding of the highest number of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) positive pools in New Jersey since 2009. Conversely, this year's number of West Nile Virus (WNV) positive pools in New Jersey is relatively low. This pattern of increased EEE and decreased WNV was also noted in 2009 in New Jersey. Also, it was reported that Morris and Atlantic counties have had the most EEE positive pools sampled.

Sussex County Soil Conservation District – Agricultural and Natural Resources District Division staff has been working with the Sussex Soil Conservation District staff and supervisors since March 2018 as they proceed towards merging with the Warren Soil Conservation District. This consolidation is necessary due to staffing and financial concerns. Currently, the Sussex Soil Conservation District office and staff have been co-located with the Warren Soil Conservation District office in Hackettstown.