

Secretary's Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
June 24, 2020

While almost all New Jersey Department of Agriculture employees are working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, the department is functioning as normal as possible while performing its regular business. We have placed COVID-19 information related to agriculture on our website at nj.gov/agriculture and have been updating that site regularly.

Jersey Fresh – The Marketing and Development Division's Jersey Fresh marketing staff have worked with the ad agency to develop and implement media plans starting with online ads in both Google Display ads and Google responsive ads. Radio and billboards will begin in late June through Labor Day. In addition, staff are shipping and delivering Point-of-Purchase materials to retailers, writing articles, continuing to publish and disseminate Jersey Fresh Availability Reports and updating the FindJerseyFresh.com website.

Farmworkers Guidance Document Call – Secretary Fisher and Agricultural and Natural Resources Division staff participated on an evening Webex call on June 16 for the farm community with representatives from Rutgers Cooperative Extension, New Jersey Departments of Health and Labor, and Federally Qualified Health Centers staff to walk through the main requirements of the Guidance Document for Farmworkers, their Employers and Housing Providers. A Q&A session followed the slide presentation.

Child and Adult Care Food Program – The Food and Nutrition Division's Child and Adult Care Food Program team has completed 171 out of 205 COVID-19 Waiver Requests from various CACFP institutions who are providing nutritious meals to their participants. Some institutions have remained open, while others are providing meals through the grab and go established meal services and even meal deliveries to the participants' homes. We have a total of 164 adult and childcare institutions, which equates to 233 facilities providing some type of meal service; and more waivers are still being submitted for approval.

Animal Emergency Planning and Preparedness – County Animal Response Team (CART) leaders have been provided the CART Guidance Document- Sheltering in a COVID-19 environment. The guidance document offers modifications to the pet sheltering manual to adhere to public health recommendations during the COVID-19 pandemic. A conference call with the CART leaders is being scheduled to discuss the document and address any questions or concerns.

Canadian Blueberry Fruit Certification Program – There are 30 New Jersey blueberry growers that have been approved for participation in this year's Canadian Blueberry Fruit Certification Program (BCP). The BCP program is designed to facilitate the export of fresh blueberry fruit into Canada without fumigation while protecting against the introduction of blueberry maggot (*Rhagoletis mendax*) into Canadian provinces. Program staff members have trained all New Jersey participants about the protocols and grower-responsibilities so they could comply with CFIA regulations.

Summer Food Service Program – The Food and Nutrition Division's Summer Food Service Program continues to provide daily technical assistance and guidance to current and potential sponsors regarding COVID-19 waivers and 2020 summer operations. Food service contract extensions, along with bid and addendum procedures are also being addressed. Staff is currently reviewing and approving 2020 sponsor applications. To date, 160 applications have been submitted which includes 39 new sponsors.

Commodity Inspection and Grading – The Marketing and Development Division's Commodity Inspection

and Grading essential staff are conducting all requested USDA Terminal Market and Shipping Point inspections (average of 350 per month); scheduling and conducting USDA on-farm Third Party Audits; conducting all required FDA contract inspections; conducting requested on-farm fertilizer inspections; updating Animal Feed and Produce Safety Inventory, reviewing farm Produce Safety plans and preparing risk evaluations. In addition, we have completed invoicing of USDA Fruit & Vegetable certificates for all completed Terminal Market and Shipping point inspections.

Nursery Inspection – The Plant Industry Division nursery inspection staff continued to assist USDA APHIS with their emergency response to the potential introduction of the plant pathogenic bacteria; *Ralstonia solanacearum* race 3 biovar 2 (RSr3b2). Previously, 10 New Jersey greenhouse locations which received host plant material from an infected source in Guatemala last winter were inspected by state and federal staff for this disease. An additional five greenhouses were visited during May which targeted a second variety of geranium sent from the same positive facility in Guatemala. No symptoms of the virus were observed.

Animal Health Diagnostic Lab – The Pathology Laboratory Section, for the month of May 2020, completed a total of 411 tests and/or procedures. Tests and/or procedures involved gross necropsy examination, histopathologic (microscopic), and parasitological preparation and evaluation. 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 animal), private food and companion animal owners, NJ State Agencies, racetrack, 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 ruminant, companion animal 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.

Jersey Seafood Marketing – The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, in coordination with the NJDA, recently launched a web-based map application to promote seafood products that have been landed, grown, or harvested in New Jersey by identifying seafood markets selling these products.