

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

August 26, 2020

**School Nutrition Programs Memo** – Secretary Fisher's memo dated August 6, 2020 was sent through the School Nutrition Electronic and Application Reimbursement System (SNEARS) and notified all participating public and non-public schools required to participate in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, and those that voluntarily opt-in to those programs that they must offer required meals to all children, regardless of eligibility, when the school day is four hours or instruction is virtual or remote. Since school districts will be able to choose distance learning as an only option for school year 2020-21, some Q & A's and guidance documents are being reviewed and revised to reflect guidance for schools that choose that option. We continue to provide support to School Food Authorities as they navigate through reopening plans.

**Agricultural Certification Extension** – The Governor signed the Permit Extension Act (A3919/S2346) which extends certain permits during the COVID-19 emergency. Agricultural Certifications issued by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) are included in this extension, so any Agricultural Certification which expired on or after March 9, 2020 will be extended. Any complete new, renewal or modification application already submitted to the NJDEP will continue to be reviewed and issued for the full five-year term. Any certification holder who received the first renewal reminder which contained the pre-filled application form does not need to do anything at this time. The NJDEP will forward you a new pre-filled application once the extension period is over.

**Spotted Lanternfly** – Plant Industry Division Spotted Lanternfly survey crews are continuing treatments and property assessments. Field staff are treating smaller ailanthus trees (Tree of Heaven) in the environment using the "hack and squirt" method. They also are treating the remaining larger ailanthus trees to make them toxic to feeding by the Spotted Lanternfly. A total of 39 properties were treated with pesticides in July. Treatment priorities remain focused on agricultural areas along with seaports and rail yards. Staff also responded to 78 calls and emails from the public about Spotted Lanternfly on their property. Most of the reported sightings were from residents in the eight quarantined counties.

**Animal Health Diagnostic Lab Pathology Examinations and Testing** – The Pathology Laboratory Section for the month of July 2020 completed a total of 429 tests and/or procedures. Tests and/or procedures involved gross necropsy examination, histopathologic (microscopic), 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 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.

**Grant Programs** – The Marketing and Development Division is fulfilling requirements under the grant programs. They include the Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG), Animal Feed Regulatory Program Standards (AFRPS) Produce Safety, Livestock, Risk Management (RMA), Rural Development, and Wine Industry Grants, which include research and development. In addition, we are monitoring Grant Proposal Awards and preparing proposals. The 2021 SCBG has been submitted to the USDA and is awaiting award. Staff is assisting Rutgers on a Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant pre-proposal for the livestock processing project and livestock survey that will extend what was accomplished with the livestock processing Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG).

**CARES Act Reimbursements** – The Food and Nutrition Division has expended approximately \$144 million in CARES Act funding on claim reimbursements for March through earlier this month. These funds are used for paying National School Lunch/Breakfast, Special Milk, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program claims for reimbursement, starting with March 2020 claims and going forward through September 2020.

**Jersey Seafood** – Agricultural and Natural Resources Division staff are working to update and enhance the marketing tools available to New Jersey seafood harvesters and growers. These efforts are still in their infancy but will likely include an examination of web and print materials, partnering with other agencies and growers to identify timely needs, and connecting potential initiatives to already successful programs, such as those developed for the Jersey Fresh program. One partnership program already in development is the Support NJ Seafood web application developed with NJDEP mapping expertise, available at [www.nj.gov/dep/njseafood](http://www.nj.gov/dep/njseafood). Additional items are under development for the Support NJ Seafood website, as well as for the Jersey Seafood website.

**Organic Inspections** – The Marketing and Development Division’s organic certification employees are completing work on certifications and in-house field inspectors are starting to do a modified inspection of existing operations for renewals and are doing on-site inspections of new applicants. Additional planning is underway to train more in-house staff to do organic inspections.

**Nursery Inspections** – Plant Industry Division staff conducted regular nursery inspections at 150 locations to ensure that regulated ornamental plant materials are free from injurious pest, insects and diseases. Program staff worked together at three of the largest nursery locations in southern New Jersey encompassing over 1,300 acres of containerized nursery stock. During these inspections, staff flagged 3,311 virus-infected rose plants and a Notice of Rejection was issued for these roses with orders to remove and destroy or return to the supplier.

**Vector-borne Disease Working Group** – A Division of Animal Health staff veterinarian attended the vector-borne disease working group meeting on July 29. The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) reported an increase in medical doctors submitting tick-borne disease testing. Testing load and the number of cases are markedly up compared with previous seasons. The NJDOH vector-borne surveillance report for week 32 brings multiple updates. One human case of West Nile virus (WNV) was reported in Essex County. WNV has been detected in mosquito pools in 11 counties; Bergen, Burlington, Camden, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Monmouth, Morris, Somerset, Union, and Warren. The first WNV positive pools were detected in week 27 (June 28 – July 4, 2020) from Mercer and Monmouth counties. To date, the only Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) positive pool was collected from Atlantic County in week 25. Four mosquito pools collected from four counties (Bergen, Cumberland, Middlesex, Monmouth) have tested positive for Jamestown Canyon virus (JCV) in week 23, 25, 28, 29, and 31. As of August 14, 2020, no animals had tested positive for WNV or EEE this year.