Secretary's Report to the
New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
October 28, 2026

Dairy Issues Involving Milk Inspections -- Work continues with the plant willing to segregate milk for Jersey Fresh and School Lunch Local programs. The processing capabilities are in place; the holdup is the development of routes for sustainable milk procurement and each farm's ability to exit their respective cooperative, if they desire. The section has learned that milk procurers that could move this milk are reluctant to enter the state again, with some citing issues with the Department of Health having oversight of processors' milk inspections. There also have been some processors not committing to enter New Jersey to operate plants over the same issue.

DAH Emergency Preparedness and Response -- For compliance with the National Poultry Improvement guidelines, the biennial 14-point biosecurity audit of two table egg layers premises was performed. An animal health technician completed audits of the layer barns, which present unique challenges for depopulation, disposal, and decontamination. Site-specific emergency plans were discussed, and biosecurity audits were evaluated to be satisfactory. This audit was of particular importance as Fall wild bird migratory season approaches, and with it the risk of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) disease introduction to domestic poultry.

Transfer of Development Rights Bank --The state TDR Bank met on October 5 to review a counter proposal from Woolwich Township related to repayment of a $5 million loan it received from the bank in 2016. Staff were directed to continue negotiating a settlement on this matter under certain parameters established by the Bank.

Livestock Processing -- The North Jersey livestock processing project continues to be closely related to Warren County Community College and developing a teaching-type processing unit. Discussions also have been underway with a South Jersey project for a cut-up facility. It will take some time to establish a slaughter facility and if the group could find shackle space at another USDA inspected facility, a cut-and-wrap facility could be up and running more quickly than a complete unit. One additional very small processing unit is looking to refurbish a plant that has been dormant for approximately 10 years.

Farm to School -- October is National Farm to School Month, highlighting initiatives that connect students with local agriculture, food production, and nutrition education. The Farm to School team visited Bogota School District to highlight its work in Farm to School. The district established a new Farm to Table Science class in which students maintain a school garden and hydroponic growing systems, with student-grown produce incorporated into culinary classes. Students will also participate in food preservation through canning, further connecting agricultural production with culinary education and value-added products.

2027 Agricultural Convention -- Communication and preparations continue for the 2027 Agricultural Convention, as the Department works with VGANJ. Convention billing/purchasing planning discussions are underway. Preparations for the 2027 Resolutions Committee are underway. After the Committee is named on October 28, staff will finalize materials and prepare for the first in-person meeting on November 23.

Gleaning Grant – The Department has awarded $518,000 in grants to four organizations. They are: Americas Gleaned Seafood, Bushels of Blessings, Foodshed Alliance, and the New Jersey Agricultural Society. All four organizations have signed grant agreements, concluding the pre-award period for this program.

Summer EBT -- The Summer EBT 2026 program has officially ended, and a notice has been posted on the NJ Summer EBT website. The general inquiry mailbox will remain open through the end of November to address individual data corrections. Replacement cards resulting from data corrections will be issued on a case-by-case basis through November 29, 2026, consistent with the federal 90-day post-operational period.

Pathology Examinations and Testing -- The Division in September 2026 completed 730 tests/procedures. Tests/procedures involved gross necropsy examination, histopathologic (microscopic), immunohistochemical and parasitological preparation and evaluation and these cases generated additional diagnostic tests for other laboratory sections (e.g., bacteriology, virology and molecular diagnostics). Results from these case submissions help to support practicing veterinarians (large, mixed, and small animal), private food and companion animal owners, 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; and law enforcement forensic investigation.

Pinelands Base Value Increase/Offer Procedure –The new base value for the Pinelands Formula Value, increased for inflation, was officially adopted upon publication in the September 21, 2026, NJ Register. The SADC approved the base adjustment from $1,600/acre to $2,500/acre in 2025 as part of the development of the new Formula Valuation method.

Cartesian Snail -- Division of Plant Industry staff helped conduct a survey for Cartesian snail (*Monacha* spp.) in and around the Port of Salem in September. This was a cooperative survey between NJDA and USDA APHIS PPQ. *Monacha* spp. prefers dry, grassy habitats like roadsides and pastures. Among the concerns for its introduction into our state is this species potential for spreading livestock parasites (such as sheep lungworm disease) or vector trematodes (*Brachylaimus spp*.). U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and USDA-APHIS have intercepted species like *Monacha ocellata* in cargo shipments (such as furniture imports) recently in nearby ports of entry, prompting the surveillance of New Jersey's port environs. Most of the state's major ports are already being monitored for the introduction of exotic snails. Several snail samples were collected and submitted to APHIS identifiers for identification.

Succession Planning -- Division Directors have submitted their responses to the succession planning questionnaire. A draft report has been prepared and will be provided to the Secretary and the New Jersey State Board Strategic Planning Committee for review.

Nursery Inspections – Division of Plant Industry staff inspected 132 nurseries in the past month. There were 68 phytosanitary inspections conducted, certifying plant material for shipment to other states and countries. There were 13 federal phytosanitary inspections of 6,505 grams of individual horticultural seeds to Brazil; as well as 1,500 plants 47,640 bulbs, and 124 rhizomes to Canada and the Czech Republic.