Secretary's Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
September 23, 2026

Local/Regional Processing Plans: The North Jersey livestock processing project continues focus continues to be closely related to Warren County Community College and a teaching-type processing unit. This type of unit is usually smaller in the number of units being processed weekly, as the facility is more focused on education and workforce development than throughput directly into the market. Labor is mainly student-supplied. Discussions are underway with a South Jersey project, focusing on funding for a cut-up facility.

Box Tree Moth Infestation: NJDA was alerted to the presence of Box Tree Moth (BTM) in the town of Newport, Cumberland County, on Friday, August 21. Initial surveys in this area determined heavy infestations in several Delaware Bay communities. The determination was confirmed by APHIS and the NJDA county quarantine was expanded to include Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland counties. Division staff, with assistance from local Rutgers Cooperative Extension, organized an emergency meeting at the Seabrook Fire Hall in Deerfield on Monday evening, August 31, with over 30 growers able to sign compliance agreements with NJDA.

New World Screwworm Quarantine Order: While facing an increasing number of New World Screwworm (NWS) cases in Texas, NJDA, in agreement with NJDOH, released the state's domestic animal New World Screwworm Quarantine Order (https://nj.gov/agriculture/NWS). Notifications were distributed to stakeholders, veterinarians, livestock owners, animal rescues, and public health officials. Livestock originating in an NWS-affected state now require permitted approval from the State Veterinarian for transport into New Jersey. The NJDA DAH has reviewed and approved five permit requests for the movement of horses and cattle into the state.

Special Occasion Event Rules: The drafting of the Special Occasion Event rules by SADC staff is nearing completion. The final version will be sent to the Attorney General and Governor's office for review this month and, after the AG Office's input, will be presented to the committee for consideration, likely at its October meeting.

Pathology Examinations and Testing: The DAH Pathology Laboratory Section completed 1,034 tests and procedures in August 2026. Tests and/or procedures included gross necropsy examination, histopathologic (microscopic), immunohistochemical, and parasitological preparation and evaluation. These cases prompted additional diagnostic tests in other laboratory sections (e.g., bacteriology, virology, and molecular diagnostics). Results from these cases help to support practicing veterinarians (large, mixed, and small animal), private food and companion animal owners, NJ State Agencies, racetracks, wildlife, zoos, and nonprofit animal facilities.

Animal Emergency Preparedness: Emergency preparedness staff attended the ESF6 annual meeting, where state, federal, and NGO partners participated in a hurricane-scenario tabletop exercise. Takeaways for the Division of Animal Health include the need to review our communication channels that don't rely on electricity or cell towers and to educate producers about the potential risks of flooding to animal health. NJDA, in its role as ESF11 Coordinator for emergencies, serves as a support agency to ESF6 (headed up by the Department of Human Services), and primarily is charged with ensuring that co-located pet shelters, with County Animal Response Team (CART) staffing, can be established near human shelters to reduce instances in which humans refuse to evacuate.

Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) Survey: Both NJDA and USDA APHIS PPQ, in a joint effort, are trying to reduce SLF populations at high-priority locations such as seaports, airports, commuter lots, and high-volume shipping operations to slow the spread of this pest. Treatment using pesticides is the primary method of population control for SLF. This month, treatments were conducted on 12 properties on which 75 trees were treated.

2027 Aquaculture Development Plan Update: Staff continue to work with committee co-chairs on the 2027 Aquaculture Development Plan update. Currently, the focus is a survey for industry and associated resource personnel, followed by public meetings. The goal was to have the survey ready for October, with a potential delay because the survey instrument must first be reviewed & approved by IRB at Rutgers (review is necessary for research with human subjects).

Farmers Market Guidelines on Products for Sale: Due to the development of expanded farm market inspections, and some restrictions being encountered around by local health department interpretations of Chapter 24 (state law governing food safety requirements), staff are updating the farm market guidelines produced years ago by NJDA to meet FSMA Retail Requirements prior to a meeting with NJDOH.

Next Gen Program Succession Planning Grants: The Next Gen Program can refer preserved farmland owners (as well as those in the process of preserving their farm) to a $10,000 grant through American Farmland Trust to support farm transfer and succession planning. AFT recently clarified that both the senior and junior generations can apply (or the outgoing and incoming farmers, if unrelated), meaning the farm/farmers could technically receive up to $20,000 to develop/implement their plans. This grant will only be available until June 2027. www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/documents/nextgen/farmtransfersuccessionsupport.pdf

School Nutrition Program: The Department of Human Services has recently reached out to inform the Division that they found an error in the Medicaid data that they have been providing to our department. This error impacted free and reduced-price meal benefits and S-EBT, resulting in about 30,000 eligible students without benefits while 5,000 ineligible students were receiving them. Guidance is currently being issued to schools to correct these eligibilities. Separately, the community eligibility team provided a training webinar on Wednesday, September 9, to all schools that can benefit from the Community Eligibility Provision.

Farm to School: New Jersey Farm to School Week is ongoing, September 21–25, featuring a statewide itinerary of school district and farm visits that highlight the diverse ways Farm to School programs are being implemented and sustained across New Jersey. Throughout the week, NJDA staff will visit schools highlighting local food procurement, school gardens, outdoor education, hydroponics, farm-to-table initiatives, nutrition and agricultural education, and collaboration with the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP).

2027 State Agricultural Convention: Preparations are underway for the upcoming Agricultural Convention, including development of an MOA to clarify roles and responsibilities related to venue procurement. **Resolutions/Position Papers:** Division Directors are submitting proposed updates for the 2027 State Agricultural Convention. The review period will continue through **October and November,** including the Resolutions Committee meetings.

Food and Hunger Program: To date, the six EFOs have collectively distributed 135,753,994.66 pounds of food and provided food assistance to 6,758,983 households statewide. All EFOs were granted extensions through **S**eptember 30, 2026 for final reports, which are due 30 days following the end of the extension period.