**Secretary’s Report to the State Board for July 2025**

**Livestock Issues in New World Screwworm –** Division of Animal Health staff are staying updated on the issues surrounding New World Screwworm (NWS) and it potential to impact U.S. livestock. Mexico’s National Service of Agro-Alimentary Health, Safety, and Quality (SENASICA) reported a new case of NWS in Ixhuatlan de Madero, Veracruz, Mexico, which is approximately 160 miles northward of the current sterile fly dispersal grid, 370 miles south of the U.S./Mexico border. This new northward detection comes approximately two months after northern detections were reported in Oaxaca and Veracruz, less than 700 miles away from the U.S. border, which triggered the closure of U.S. ports to Mexican cattle, bison, and horses on May 11, 2025. While USDA announced a risk-based phased port reopening strategy for cattle, bison, and equine from Mexico beginning as early as July 7, 2025, this newly reported NWS case raises significant concern about the previously reported information shared by Mexican officials and severely compromises the outlined port reopening schedule of five ports from July 7–September 15. USDA Secretary Rollins has ordered the closure of livestock trade through southern ports of entry effective immediately.

**SADC Budget Passed:** On June 30, 2025, the SADC’s budget for fiscal year 2024 (as FY25 and FY26 still are pending) was passed by the Legislature, which will allow the SADC to replenish certain program funding pots and retain its current staffing level.

**National NAAMO Conference and State Marketing Efforts** – The Division of Marketing and Development this week has been hosting the annual conference of the North American Agricultural Marketing Officials (NAAMO) in Cherry Hill, Camden County. Approximately 75 people from agriculture marketing staffs around the country have been discussing the marketing of farm products in this challenging new era. Director and staff continue to meet with the new ad agency each week to discuss campaign and council strategies. Radio spots were recorded by Secretary Wengryn and have begun airing. Staff continues to work with OIT and a vendor to tweak the FindJerseyFresh.com website. Director and staff followed up with Travel & Tourism about the Agritourism grant MOU language. Director and staff hosted the annual National Blueberry Day event on three boardwalks along the Jersey Shore, and are planning for tomato and peach days coming up.

**The Terroir New Jersey Wine Showcase** – On Saturday, July 19, Secretary Wengryn attended this wine showcase, which aims to attain recognition and respect for New Jersey’s Wine Industry. The Showcase is not a competition, but a platform to set standards and benchmarks for wine quality in our state. ‘Showcase Selection’ wines will demonstrate viticultural excellence and reflect each winery’s commitment to using 100-percent state-grown and produced fruit. This approach aims to elevate New Jersey's status as a notable wine-producing region. The Secretary attended the evaluations on Saturday morning, as well as the welcoming reception and dinner.

**SSCC Assistance --** On June 16, 2025, Division of Agricultural and Natural Resources staff participated in the State Soil Conservation Committee meeting held virtually via TEAMs. Focus was on updating the SSCC Directory. It was scheduled to be completed on July 22, 2025, after the newly formed district Del Atlantic Soil Conservation District (result of Camden and Cape Atlantic Soil Conservation Districts merging on July 1, 2025) has their first business meeting, at which they will assign supervisory positions.

**Summer EBT --** As of Friday, July 18th, Summer EBT benefit cards were activated successfully, with $50.9 million in benefits redeemed as of that date. This represents a utilization rate of 60 percent.

Summer EBT staff continue to handle a high volume of calls and emails regarding card activation issues, cards not received, and mailing address changes. The Summer EBT team met with DHS on July 3, to address the card activation issue as a top priority. DHS confirmed that fraud-protection measures designed to prevent telecom “skimming” may be contributing to the problem, as the phone vendor will “block” any numbers with high-risk score thresholds, suspicious activity, or too many failed log-in attempts. As an interim solution, parents are advised to attempt card activation from a different phone number or a landline, if possible. The Summer EBT Eligibility Lookup Tool for Families is live and publicly available on the State’s official Summer EBT website. This initial public-facing, self-service web application has been developed to provide families with information regarding their children’s eligibility status for Summer EBT benefits. This tool represents the first phase of a broader “Parent Portal” initiative, currently under development. The portal will ultimately serve as a secure platform for household-directed benefits management and will be accomplished through a multi-phased deployment strategy over the course of the next three years.

**Rose Mosaic Virus** -- During June, Division of Plant Industry staff conducted inspections of rose plants at New Jersey’s largest shipping nursery, for roses displaying symptoms of rose mosaic virus. Inspectors flagged 1,002 infected roses during inspections. The plants were removed from the nursery and destroyed.

**Spotted Lanternfly** -- NJDA and USDA APHIS PPQ 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. Population reduction is primarily accomplished by applying contact insecticides directly to spotted lanternflies, or by using systemic insecticides on Tree of Heaven so that when lanternflies feed on the trees they will die. Before conducting treatments, team members must secure permission from property owners by getting them to sign our treatment agreement. During the month, treatments were conducted on 14 properties using contact insecticides. Sometimes a different approach to population control is used. Herbicides can be used to remove the favorite food of spotted lanternfly; the Tree of Heaven (***Ailanthus altissima***). This month herbicide treatments were used to kill 613 ***Ailanthus*** saplings and 151 larger ***Ailanthus*** trees. In addition to chemical treatments, this project has several physical (non-spray) population control procedures. One such approach is the use of vacuums. This month 6,675 spotted lanternfly nymphs were removed using vacuums. Another non-spray technique to reduce SLF populations is insect trapping. A total of 125 insect traps have been deployed throughout South Jersey and are being serviced regularly in high priority areas.

**Right to Farm Policy**: At its June meeting the SADC found the policy adopted by some CADB’s requiring farmers to be denied by their township before the matter will be reviewed for Right to Farm eligibility to be inconsistent with the intent of the Right to Farm Act.

**Farm to School --** The Farm to School team conducted the New Jersey Farm to School Academy Pilot Program. A three-day Summer Series is being held at different locations across the state. Three school districts – Camden School District, West New York Board of Education, and New Brunswick Board of Education – and one Early Childhood Education Center, St. Joseph’s-Pro Cathedral were selected to participate in the pilot. Through the summer series and yearlong coaching and training sessions, each team will plan a sustainable Farm to School Program within their school district.

**Livestock Processing** – The North Jersey Processing Center has been working on alternative funding from groups that fund nonprofits. The Department has supplied support for the group as they work to secure the land for the site. A site committee has been formed to complete the steps of securing the property and ready it for building, starting in 2025. Project continues to move forward slowly, but the hope is that final approvals from the county for the land on which the plant will be built will come soon. The group visited the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI) in Minnesota to see their innovation center, which supports a livestock processing center.