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

**Urban Agriculture Activities** – Chief of Staff Tameko Webster and Agriculture and Natural Resources Division Manager Frank Minch participated in the Monthly Urban Agriculture Workgroup Meeting on Wednesday, August 20. The meeting centered on planning and coordinating upcoming site visits to deepen understanding of urban agriculture operations and community needs. As part of this month’s activities, the committee visited three urban farming sites: Green Acre Community Garden – Paterson; City Green – Clifton; CUMAC – Paterson. These sites provided valuable insights into the challenges and success of local urban agriculture initiatives. Additionally, on Thursday, August 21, they attended the Urban Agriculture Symposium at Mercer County Community College (MCCC).  The event highlighted MCCC’s new Urban Agriculture curriculum, showcasing the institution’s commitment to advancing education and workforce development in this growing field.

**New World Screwworm** – The USDA on August 15 unveiled an initiative to combat the New World Screwworm (NWS), as concern has grown over its expansion into northern parts of Mexico bordering the Southwestern United States. The NWS fly’s maggots burrow into the flesh of living animals, often resulting in serious damage. Livestock owners, especially in states closest to Mexico, have urged USDA to take aggressive action. The agency responded with a plan that includes Innovation (including new traps and lures, as well as NWS therapeutics to fight the larvae if they get to the U.S.); Expansion of “sterile fly” technology through a production facility in Texas; Wildlife migration prevention, to reduce wildlife infected with the larvae crossing over into the U.S.; Population reduction, by working with Mexican officials to reduce the screwworm population in that country; Slaughter detection, with USDA inspectors checking live animal and carcasses at slaughter plants for NWS.

# **Summer EBT** – The New Jersey Department of Human Services confirmed that 563,837 Summer EBT benefit cards were activated successfully, with over $60.7 million in benefits redeemed. This represents 70.60 percent of total benefits issued. The last day of the Summer EBT operational period is August 31, 2025.

**Animal Health Testing/CVIs** – In August (through August 22), Division staff performed 686 tests and 41 necropsies. Testing included Avian Influenza, Bacterial cultures and identifications, antimicrobial sensitivities, CEM, Coggins, Serology, Molecular tests, Animal Feed Testing etc. Necropsy included livestock, avian, and pet animal necropsies. Staff also reviewed and processed 5,846 Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (CVIs) in the CVI Central software system to facilitate livestock movement.

**Agrivoltaics Progress** – Rutgers University’s New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station and the NJDA jointly issued press releases about Rutgers’ three agrivoltaics farm locations being named as “Solar Farm of 2025” by the North American Agrivoltaics Awards program on August 5. The releases not only highlighted the success of the Rutgers program, but also spotlighted the agrivoltaics resolution passed by the delegates at the 2025 State Agricultural Convention expressing the industry’s support for integrating renewable energy into their operations.

**Preservation Training** – SADC staff are seeking meetings with county agricultural development boards for updates or customized trainings in issues of concern to the Board, including: Legislation and CADB Responsibilities, the Right to Farm Act, the Acquisition Process, Special Occasion Events (SOEs), and the Soil Protection Standards (SPS).

**TEFAP Bonus Offerings** – The Division of Food & Nutrition’s Food Distribution Unit received an additional offering of fish, fruit and bean purchase from the USDA, with a delivery period of November 2025 through October 2026. New Jersey’s share of the offering equates to 145 truckloads of product. Division staff worked with food banks to confirm their desired quantities and delivery dates, with the orders being placed with the USDA by August 20.

**Highlands Training** – Division of Agricultural and Natural Resources staff are drafting additional guidance on agricultural issues in the Highlands, following a meeting in June with Highlands Council and NJDEP officials. Written guidance will cover general parameters to be considered when making official management and development decisions.

**Spotted Wing Drosophila control** – Staff from the Phillip Alampi Beneficial Insect Lab (PABIL) have conducted two releases of parasitoid wasps (*Ganaspis kimorum*), deploying 500 in each release, for control of Spotted Wing Drosophila around blueberry fields in Burlington County. Also, PABIL staff collected 1,400 Kyushu psyllids (used to control the invasive plant Japanese knotweed) for shipment.

**Produce Giveaways at the Shore** – Assistant Secretary Atchison and his Division staff hosted a Tomato Giveaway Day on August 4, and also a Peach Giveaway Day on August 22. Both were reported to be popular and garnering a very positive response from people on the boardwalks.

**Equine Herpes Virus in Sussex County** – The NJDA has quarantined a property in Sussex County after at least one horse there developed the highly infectious equine herpes myeloencephalopathy (EHM). The horse, a 20-year-old mare, developed acute clinical signs on August 03, and was subsequently humanely euthanized. One week prior, another horse on the property presented with similar neurological signs and was humanely euthanized, without diagnostic testing. EHM is the often-deadly neurologic form of Equine Herpes Virus (EHV-1) infection. The remaining horse on the premises is under quarantine and being monitored for sickness.

**LDD (Gypsy Moth) Requests** – A total of 34 municipalities across eight counties asking for fall egg mass surveys have been received by the program staff and responses to those requests have begun.

**Animal Emergency Planning** – Division of Animal Health staff conducted the monthly HPAI Working Group meeting, which featured a guest speaker from USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) who reviewed a new tool that NRCS developed for planners and farmers to determine suitable areas for handling animal-mortality events. The tool is public-facing and can be found on the NRCS Soils webpage at: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/Emergency_Animal_Mortality_Management_368_NHCP_CPS_2022.pdf>.