Ag Alert!

An informational publication courtesy of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cayuga

June 2015

Planting season for some got off to a slow start and as this Ag Alert! is compiled some farms are finishing up planting. There has been a lot of activity and information coming across our desks and computers and we felt it was worthwhile to send along another Ag Alert! - we hope you agree. So take a minute to review the Calendar of Events for some pretty impressive meetings locally and out of state. We believe future alerts will be shared via post card until this fall. Please keep safety first as you go about your daily routine!

- The fact that milk prices are falling is not new news as prices for the commodity fluctuate frequently. Page 3 holds some excellent tips and reminders about what to do to manage during a larger than expected price decline. Many of the tips in this article can also be translated for cash crop producers who also are experiencing falling prices.
- There is little doubt that our farm economy is facing a difficult financial future near term. Page 4 has some helpful Do’s and Don’ts to help navigate these difficult times. Also, remember that NY FarmNet is free and confidential and they can be reached by calling 1-800-547-FARM (3276).
- While some first cutting has already been started an interesting website is available which provides weekly reports, more details can be found on Page 5.
- Also on Page 5 are a few of the day old pheasant chicks who arrived at the CCE Cayuga Education Center on May 19th and were quickly relocated to their new foster homes. Are you interested in raising pheasant chicks for release next year? Contact our office (315) 255-1183 ext. 238 to be put on the reminder list for next year.
- Over the years a number of changes have occurred on both the state and national level regarding hiring employees to work on farms. Some farms feel if they offer an internship they are not ‘hiring’ an employee. I have been part of email conversations and some smaller workshops where producers feel that offering an internship might give the person experience in farming and allow for some tasks on the farm to be completed. Do not get caught in a bad situation through carelessness. NY FarmNet is free and confidential and they can be reached by calling 1-800-547-FARM (3276). While some first cutting has already been started an interesting website is available which provides weekly reports, more details can be found on Page 5.
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For Cayuga County Residents

- Recycle your old tires.
- Up to 40 tires per household.
- Tires on and off rims are accepted.
- Cost: $1.50 per tire **Price subject to change**
- Size limit: 30 inches TALL (outside diameter)
- Reduce fire risk and West Nile Virus!
- No Businesses Please!
- $31 to 36" TALL are $5 each

Tractor Tires

If you are looking to dispose of tractor tires, we are unable to accept them at this event but please call the office so that we can help you dispose of them properly 315-255-1183 ext. 229.

Sponsored by: Cayuga County Soil & Water Conservation District, Cornell Cooperative Extension Cayuga County, Cayuga County Department Planning & Economic Development, Cayuga County Solid Waste Management Program, Cayuga Recycles.

Other Upcoming Recycling Events

- Household Hazardous Waste
- Fall Electronics

Stay tuned for more information OR check our blog for updates: http://blogs.cornell.edu/cccayuga

Sincerely,

Keith Severson
Agriculture Resource Educator

Judy Wright
Agriculture Resource Educator

The information given herein is supplied with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement is implied by Cornell Cooperative Extension. Where trade names are used, no discrimination is intended and no endorsement is implied. Every effort has been made to provide correct and up-to-date pesticide recommendations. Nevertheless, changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly and human errors are possible. Any recommendations herein are not a substitute for pesticide labeling. Please read the label before applying.
Calendar of Events

Below is a list of upcoming events that we thought might be important to you! If you ever have further questions or need to clarify any information, you can always check out our website http://blogs.cornell.edu/ceceayuga, go to the Ag Calendar under the Agriculture tab on top. We try our best to keep information as up-to-date as possible so that you have a quick, easy reference available 24/7. Of course, you can always call our office with any questions or concerns you might have at 315-255-1183.

**JUNE**

June 12—Juneberry Production Workshop
Seneca County Cornell Cooperative Extension is hosting a Juneberry Production Workshop on June 12th at the Barn at 7328 Ann Street in Ovid. Sign in will start at 8:30 a.m., the workshop will begin at 9:00 a.m. and go until 2:00 p.m. The cost will be $30 and will include a boxed lunch and a visit to a nearby Juneberry planting. Register online at https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/Juneberry_245 to register. Or contact Derek Simmonds dcs285@cornell.edu or 315-539-9251.

June 24—Northeast Fluid Milk Forum
Held at the Double Tree Hotel, 6301 NY 298, East Syracuse. A day of discussion, bringing together public and private sectors to uncover pre-competitive marketing and innovation strategies to foster growth in the fluid milk industry. To register please email: cccayuga , go to the Ag Calendar under the Agriculture tab on top.

June 25—Manure Meeting
To be held at Cayuga Onondaga BOCES, 1879 West Genesee Street Road, Auburn, NY.

From 7p.m. until 9 p.m. More information can be found on the back of this newsletter.

**PULY**


July 15—Weed Science Field Day
Held at Musgrave Research Farm, 1256 Poplar Ridge Road, Aurora from 12 p.m until 5 p.m. More information can be found on page 7 of this newsletter.

July 15—Cornell Dairy Executive Program Registration Deadline.
The Cornell Dairy Executive Program (CDEP) provides professional, cutting-edge management training for progressive dairy producers in New York and across the country. This unique year-long programs leadership and decision making skills that are necessary to run a successful dairy business in individuals who have 3 or more years of dairy experience in a decision making position. For more information or to apply go to: http://prodairy.cals.cornell.edu/conferences/dairy-executive-program or contact Heather Darrow (607)255-4478 E-Mail: hbd406@cornell.edu.

July 23—25—Cayuga County 4-H Youth Fair and Remember the Big 6
Held at the Ward O’Hara Agricultural and Country Living Museum & Dr. Joseph Karpinski Sr. Educational Center, 6880 West Lake Road, NY.

July 29—11—Irrigation Environmental Systems and Climate Adaptation Conference & Tours. Held at Cornell University’s Statler Hotel, Ithaca, NY. This 2-day regional conference will feature a unique opportunity to learn about emerging irrigation housing and management systems in conjunction with regional climate and adapt strategies to the Northeast. For more information or to pre-register online go to http://prodairy.cals.cornell.edu/dairy-climate-conference. To receive a registration brochure by mail or for questions, please contact Jenny Prento at 607-227-7943 or email blogs@cornell.edu.

**AUGUST**

August 22—CNY New York Forest Owners Association Summer Picnic, Woods Walk & Sawmill Tour—in Moravia. As more information becomes available, we will be sure to update on our website: http://blogs.cornell.edu/ceceayuga

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**Cayuga County Farm Bureau Secures Res-Q Tube**

Cayuga County Farm Bureau has announced that it has partnered with the Cayuga County Office of Emergency Management, GSI and AN Martin Systems to purchase a Res-Q Tube that will be housed in one of the county Fire Departments to aid in rescue during a grain engulfment. The Res-Q Tube is a five foot aluminum tube that comes in four curved pieces that will help save lives and is the second device to be housed in the county. There is immediate danger when someone is stuck in a grain bin and the downward pressure makes it physically impossible to hoist someone out of the grain. With the Res-Q Tube, firefighters will be able to place each piece of the tube carefully around the victim and latch the pieces together to prevent more grain from cutting into the body. It then allows them time to slowly scoop the grain and pull the victim to safety. Without this device, the situation is likely to end badly. Thank you to everyone involved in making this purchase a reality and to the dedicated firefighters who are trained to help in the case of an agricultural emergency.

**Fusarium Head Blight (FHB)**

Fusarium Head Blight (FHB) is typically a concern for small grain growers. The current risk of FHB epidemics is low to moderate over most of the state, that risk could increase next week. Visit the Fusarium Risk Management, or a nice place to enjoy a walk.

**Soybean**

Soybeans are one of the most important crops grown in the Northeast. The risk of FHB is still relatively low, but it is important to keep an eye on the weather and to be prepared to take action if necessary.

**Winter Wheat**

Winter wheat is currently at risk of infection with FHB in many areas of the state. It is important to monitor progress and take action if necessary.

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**Cayuga County Master Forest Owner!**

Get a free visit from a Cayuga County Master Forest Owner!

Enjoy resources including: Site visits, answers and research on common problems, a forest owners’ network in Cayuga County, and much more.

We can help you get what you want out of your woodland, whether that is saw timber income, wildlife management, or a nice place to enjoy a walk. Over 3/4 of New York’s forest land is under private ownership, which means sound land stewardship is necessary to optimize this vital natural resource.

To get involved with the program contact: Stefan Lutter at 315-255-1183 ext. 229 or sml339@cornell.edu and ask about the Master Forest Owner Program.

Photo Caption: One of our Cayuga County Master Forest Owners ready to assist you!
Summer time offers the opportunity to hire some extra labor to work on the farm. When thinking about hiring, whether it is part-time, full-time, or an internship opportunity, it’s always wise to know what the state and federal laws actually are concerning employment. This reminder is meant to simply encourage your thinking about compliance with appropriate labor laws, and should not be taken as a comprehensive, legal summary of all of the rules and regulations governing appropriate employment.

Hosting interns, for example, has become more complicated than in the past, and compliance regarding employment of minors on farms has also come under additional scrutiny with enforcement efforts underway in other states. Farmers have to deal with a lot of difficult and interesting compliance rules and regulations—everything from weights and measures if you are selling your product at a road side stand, to the more serious food safety regulations if you’re producing an Artisanal cheese product or added value jam or jelly. Labor compliance and regulatory information can be the furthest from your mind as you focus on the demanding seasonal tasks. However, the following pointers may help to remind you of a few basics in employing farm employees.

First, a few pointers: if you are having someone come to your farm operation (whether it is a beginning farm, or an established one hiring someone for the first time) to do work, you need to make sure that you have the appropriate working arrangements structured. A handshake agreement just does not work, so make sure you do your research on what forms and documents you need prior. This is particularly important when employing minors, who, depending upon their age, will have specific occupations they cannot perform on the farm as well as different requirements for working papers and restrictions on the number of hours they may work. You will also need workers’ compensation insurance, among other things such as a tax ID number.

Farm employees when they start employment must sign a Farm Work Agreement, which is in compliance with the general federal requirement of verifying a person’s status to work in this country under the immigration laws. Some of those links are to the workplace agreement posted which is publicly displayed, among other things such as a tax ID number.

We have had dramatic milk price declines many times in recent dairy history. The decline of the mid-1980’s, in the early 1990’s and 2009 being the most serious in memory. Some dairy farmers will experience real pain and could also be some big winners. I am going to focus on the pain component of the price decline. Significantly lower milk prices and therefore, dairy farm profits, combined with lower asset values, translating to reduced bonding capacity, pose a serious threat to the survival of many dairy farms. This current situation is different than those of the recent past in that the total economy is in difficulty. As a result, we may be facing a more prolonged period of low prices.

What should a dairy farmer consider and what actions should be taken in times of very low milk prices? Let’s apply our proven management principles and economic theory to this situation. Economic theory tells us that we need to look at the individual farm situation using both a profit and a cash flow analysis. I will start with the profit approach and then discuss cash flow.

PROFIT:
Now: If cash receipts cover cash expenses, then continue to operate the dairy as long as there is some contribution to overhead. Cash expenses include items such as hired labor, veterinary fees and medicine, utilities, interest and purchased feed. Farm produced feed/forage is assumed to be available at a profit to raise and sell the product. This assumption can be accessed if you are selling non-dairy products. There can be an overwhelming amount of information online and there are several that deal with employee safety. Below are some that we felt were worthy of passing on:

Needlestick prevention video: http://umassextension.org/needlestick/

Securidad en las lecherías: Immigrant Dairy Worker Health and Safety: http://www.migrantlaw asociation.org/seguirdad

Needlestick prevention video: http://umassextension.org/needlestick/

Next Two or Three Years: To continue in production, the expected milk price over the next year should be such that it will cover all cash costs and generate some contribution to fixed costs. If that is not the result, then the NOW strategies previously discussed as well as some that may take a bit longer to adopt and reap the benefits, should be adopted if they can be expected to reverse this scenario.

Managing During a Milk Price Fall
Written by: Wayne A. Knoblauch, Professor
Dyson School of Applied Economic and Management, Cornell University

CASH FLOW:
Now: If you are covering cash costs, but can’t cash flow from operating, then consider these options. Refinancing, interest only payments, sell non-productive assets, borrowing, improving the business, etc. should all be considered. But, only consider improving cash flow if you can expect to have a profitable business after planting time. If you are not covering cash costs, and can’t make changes to correct that situation, then liquidation or equity are the options. Equity only if there is a promise of significantly better days ahead. Remember, cash flow is the key to short run business survival. Note: eating equity simply means that the net worth or equity of your business goes down as a result of continuing to operate the business.

PLANTING TIME: If you can project to cover cash costs, including those associated with growing crops; then planning, considering options, selling non-productive assets, borrowing, etc. should be considered. But, only consider improving cash flow if you can expect to have a profitable business after planting time and be able to cover scheduled debt payments and provide for family living. If you are not covering cash costs, and can’t make changes to correct that situation, then liquidation or equity are the options. Keep in mind that liquidation or partial liquidation, and eating equity can have serious long term consequences for your business.

Next Two or Three Years: A business must be profitable to be sustainable in the long run. If you cannot project profits over the next years, then you likely will be eating equity. The only exception is if asset values increase dramatically and your strategy is one of waiting to sell assets later at higher prices. However, you are then a speculator, not a business manager.

This crisis will also pass, as have other crises. However, this current crisis will be very painful for many farmers. These trying times will severely stretch and test the management skills of all dairy farmers. We should not react out of fear, or not react at all. Rather, we should do a careful analysis of where our business is and where we want it to go. Then do an analysis of the expected impacts of possible changes on both profit and cash flow. If the outlook is still difficult, we should also view this as a time to employ our financial management skills. Many professionals are available to help. Cooperative Extension, FarmNet and consultants as well as others can give assistance, identify alternatives and provide an objective outside view of available options.
**DO’S**

- Complete a production and financial management analysis of your business for 2014. Determine response and improvement in cash flow.
- Complete a profitability and cash flow projection, for example, partial budget of the expected impacts of any changes made to improve the business.
- Meet with our lender and share your financial management analysis and cash flow projections. Communicate with our lender often and provide periodic updates regarding your financial situation.
- Cash flow management is the key to surviving difficult economic times. Continually review and update cash projections and partial budgets.
- Meet with suppliers to develop payment arrangements.
- Effectively utilize farm produced feeds, especially forages.
- Test all farm-grown forages and feed for nutrient availability and evaluate the cost effective commodities to purchase when feeding balanced rations, especially to early lactation cows.
- Treat disease outbreaks, such as mastitis, before they become worse.
- Be an astute purchaser of inputs.
- Examine family living to see if expenses can be reduced.
- Maintain a low inventory: Cull unprofitable cows, sell off surplus, etc.  Monitor the financial health of those who purchase your farm products. They may also be under severe financial pressure in this economic period.
- Seek management advise and analysis assistance early from Cooperative Extension, consultants, FarmNet and others.
- Seek personal counseling and advice from close friends, clergy, FarmNet and others.
- Routinely test manure for nutrient content and employ modern soil testing technology to minimize purchased crop nutrients.
- Utilize risk management tools such as crop insurance, livestock gross margin and the margin protection program to minimize production and price risk.
- Evaluate business arrangements with other farms that have potential to reduce costs.
- Forward contract inputs such as feed, fuel, and other supplies if you can lock in a profit.
- Obtain multiple price quotes from different suppliers for inputs such as feed, fuel, and other supplies.

**DON’TS**

- Make decisions that will make the problem worse in a week, month or six months down the road.
- Continue the same practices because “I’ve always done it that way.”
- Neglect needed accounting tasks because there isn’t time right now.
- Use farm produced feeds so rapidly that they are used up without a replacement plan.
- Reduce purchased feed just to save money.
- Purchase products that promise to be a cure-all, unless you have hard data and experiences of others to confirm.
- Make capital investments to reduce tax liability or because “it is a good buy”.
- Borrow money unless the profitability of the farm is reasonably expected to increase in order to provide for repayment.
- Neglect the details; cleaning and maintaining equipment, communicating with and managing labor, detecting heats, etc.
- Use alcohol to excess. Alcohol and other drugs can make a touchy situation seem worse.
- Assume a management strategy that worked for one that may be similar to your own.
- Adopt new technologies only after careful study.
- Monitor the financial health of those who purchase your farm products. They may also be under severe financial pressure in this economic period.

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**1st Cutting Forage Quality Management**

Kevin Ganoe, Regional Field Crop Specialist for Central New York Dairy & Field Crops Team, has been surveying spring hay growth for quality and maturity for many years. His observations are reported weekly for a program known as First Cutting Project. Below are his observations and estimation for hay growing quality for spring of 2015. For more information on the First Cutting Project or to view weekly reports, go to: http://cnydfc.cce.cornell.edu/topic.php?id=18

We have begun monitoring of 1st cutting for quality this year. Continue familiar with our procedures we use alfalfa height to predict Neutral Detergent Fiber (NDF) for alfalfa, alfalfa/grass mixed and grass stands. Alfalfa height has proven to be a reliable indicator of NDF values in the field.

Here are numbers that are helpful when using alfalfa and grass height as an indicator of NDF content:

- In general we say 100% grass stands should be cut when nearby alfalfa is 14 inches tall to achieve the desired 50% NDF.
- Begin cutting 50/50 mixed alfalfa and grass stands when nearby alfalfa is 22 inches tall for the desired 44% NDF.
- Begin cutting 100% alfalfa stands when alfalfa is 28 inches tall for the desired 40% NDF.

The desired NDF for all grass fields is 50%, 50/50 mixed alfalfa and grass fields is 44%, and pure alfalfa stands is 40%. Predicted days to cut are based on daily NDF increases for grasses of 1% point, 50/50 mixed stands of .8% points and alfalfa of .5% point. Typically NDF increases about 0.8 to 1.2 day for grasses expecting the lower end of that range in cooler weather and the higher end in warm. Alfalfa NDF increases about 0.4 to 0.7 day again figuring the lower end of that range with cool temperatures and the higher in warm. Predictions are adjusted for the coming week’s weather and right now we are assuming normal growth.

In the attached tables locations around the region are listed where we have measured alfalfa height. You can use the location and elevation as a guide to conditions that may be similar to your own.

Every year is certainly different and 2015 is no exception. We did a dry run last week feeling that the fields were behind enough not to justify reporting. It appears we may just gone through one of the biggest jumps in alfalfa growth since we have started this monitoring. Since last week we had some alfalfa fields grow 9-11 inches where typically large jumps in the past have been in the 7-8 inch range. The warm temperatures really pushed alfalfa growth. However grass growth was atypical due to the dry conditions and is short by 2-4 inches as we now see some heading out. This is a reminder that grass may be behind in growth (yield) but it isn’t behind in maturity or fiber accumulation. So check your all grass or mostly grass fields there is a good chance they may need cut. Even mixed stands should be given some scrutiny!

First Cutting Project is being conducted by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango, Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery, Oswego, Saratoga and Schoharie Counties and the Central New York Dairy and Field Crops Team.

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**Pheasant Chicks Arrive**

Over 2,400 day old pheasant chicks arrived early Tuesday, May 19th at the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cayuga County (CCE Cayuga) Education Center. CCE Cayuga facilitated the placement of the day old chicks that were from the New York State Department of Environmental Conversation’s Game Farm outside of Albany, NY into new homes for the next few weeks. Once the chicks are old enough, they will be released to repopulate the open fields and hedgerows throughout Cayuga County. Thank you to the 25 foster families who accepted the responsibility of feeding, watering and caring for these chicks for the next 8 or so weeks.