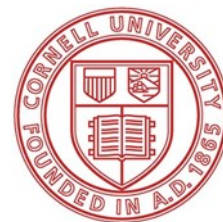


Cornell Cooperative Extension Herkimer County



August 2020

CCE Herkimer County Responds to Pandemic

In direct support of the agriculture community, CCE Herkimer County distributed "NYS Clean" hand sanitizer and facial coverings to over eighty farms, farmers markets and agricultural enterprises through Herkimer County. The supplies were free to the community and were either picked up curbside at the CCE office in East Herkimer or delivered to farms by staff. To date, 139 gallons plus 281 two-ounce bottles of hand sanitizer and 875 face coverings have been distributed.



Suzie Jones, Jones Family Farm, getting PPE from our office

Throughout the COVID-19 quarantine period, staff balanced work and safety to ensure that our services were available to county residents. As the agricultural aspects of CCE are considered an essential service under FEMA guidelines, we maintained a small office presence to answer phones and direct communications to staff working at home. Program staff worked with the public through on-line presentations and Zoom meetings for planning. Although all public events were cancelled for the season running from mid-March until at least this coming September, staff recreated programs including beginning gardening, 4-H livestock showmanship, and nutrition education for young families throughout the period.

CCE staff
volunteered
at two milk/food
distribution
events.



Milk Prices: The COVID-19 crisis has created a volatile milk market for Herkimer County dairy farmers. With the closure of schools and restaurants in March and April, milk prices tumbled and processing plants dramatically cut back on the amount of milk they accepted. As milk output for farms was up 2.8% nationally, this led to many farmers being forced to dump milk that had no market. The situation turned around in May with farmers lowering production in New York by 3.7%. As restrictions related to the pandemic eased, there was greater demand for fluid milk and other dairy products causing a June jump in wholesale prices to rise 35% over the depth of the market in April. Unfortunately, the higher prices are not predicted to hold into the fall as production and demand equalize. Herkimer CCE presented webinars, podcasts and other Cornell University produced material to help guide area farmers during this crisis.

Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

Diversity and Inclusion are a part of Cornell University's heritage. We are a recognized employer and educator valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities.

Local Foods: One of the positive effects of the COVID-19 health crisis is increased demand for organic and locally-produced fruits and vegetables. Farmers' markets throughout the region are reporting an increase in demand for locally grown food products. As the markets fully reopen this summer and fall, we hope to see a sustained growth in this part of the agricultural economy. Although it is too early to gather firm statistics, observers are noticing that Herkimer County farms are converting many fields to seasonal vegetable production rather than animal fodder. These vegetables will be sold mostly through the wholesale market into metropolitan markets.



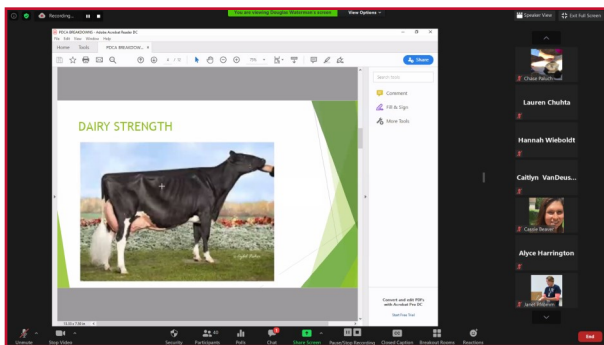
4-H has continued their commitment to plant and tend to the Utica Zoo raised bed gardens, even while COVID-19 kept the Zoo closed to the public. In May and June, staff went to the Zoo and cleared beds of weeds; raked new compost, and planted the majority of the raised beds and pallets. 4-H members and volunteers have been weeding and maintaining the gardens since the zoo opened in June, and will also be harvesting the produce for the use of the Zoo into the fall. The Utica

Zoo recently took over operations of the Beaversprite Conservation Education Center. Herkimer County 4-H clubs have worked on some trail maintenance and beautification projects. They cleared hiking trails and removed downed trees and debris. The plan is to reopen existing trails and work on establishing a new one-mile trail.



4-H Showcase of Projects: Since the County and State Fair have been cancelled, the Herkimer County 4-H office has provided a way be able to show what projects the members had been working on this year. Slide shows based on project areas submitted will be created. Youth may submit entries for both animal science and for items that would normally be displayed in the Fair youth building. A video will be compiled and shared.





4-H has offered workshop sessions for youth of all ages who wanted to learn more and get involved in dairy by offering a series on **"4-H Dairy Judging."** They had a total of 145 participants from around the state who were able to call or log in. Beginner and

advanced sessions were offered, via Zoom or by phone. **"Building Your Dairy Knowledge"** is the next series starting mid-August. Even though they won't be testing their dairy knowledge during the Dairy Challenge Contest at State Fair this year, the 4-H office wanted to provide a way to challenge the 4-H'ers to keep learning. The sessions cover the dairy animal's basic areas in nutrition, herd health, reproduction, and records.



Like so many other organizations, 4-H has had to make changes to how they do things. They have become more virtual in their project offerings and educational opportunities. There have been many subjects to "Spark" youth interest posted on Facebook. The **"4-H Weekly Spark,"** comes out every Tuesday. Subjects have included gardening, photography, animal science, arts and crafts, and sewing. Response has been very positive.

The annual **4-H Livestock Show and Sale** will be held differently this year. Bidders will be sending their bids via email or postal mail. Bids will be for price per pound of live animal. All information on animals being sold will be

on our website and final weights of animals will be taken on September 12. Bids will be opened on September 19 and highest bidders will be notified.

The 4-H Government Intern Program will be offered virtually this fall. A survey will be sent to the government teachers and guidance counselors to determine what kind of virtual programming would be most beneficial to the high schools of Herkimer County.



Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP) staff continue to work with low income families with children but now do lessons remotely through Zoom, phone, and Facebook Live to help families eat better for less. More families need EFNEP with the changes they are facing from the pandemic.

With increased interest in local foods this year due to COVID-19, the **"2020 Herkimer County Local Foods Map"** is in more demand than ever. Sixty-two farms that grow and / or produce local foods along with information on Farmers' Markets in Herkimer County are included on the map, which is available at libraries as well as other public locations in Herkimer County. An interactive online version is available on our website. Support for printing the map was provided in part by a grant from Herkimer County Mental Health through the Farm Family Assistance Project.

Herkimer County 4-H'ers partnered with Mt. Markham FFA to create planter boxes that will eventually be used as a Herkimer County Fairgrounds beautification project. This was as a community service project for both 4-H and FFA.



Renewed interest in growing your own food or buying local produce has meant increased interest in food preservation. To meet that need, CCE has added new website resources including **Food Preservation** “How to” videos from the National Center for Food Preservation at the University of Georgia and University of Maine Cooperative Extension along with 10 food preservation webinars from CCE Saratoga County that are recorded and added to our website.

The **Central New York Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops** (CNYDLFC) Team has shifted from in-person contact to online platforms but hope to have more face-to-face contact as they move into the fall. In the meantime, the team is always there for producers by phone, Zoom, or a socially distanced in-person meeting. They continue to strive to provide up-to-date, time sensitive information to their producers.

Throughout the pandemic, the team provided important guidance to farms on a variety of COVID-19 related issues: Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), and the forms needed; how to write a safety plan to be compliant with the New York Forward orders including plan templates, examples and supporting documents; the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) Programs; partnering with PRO-DAIRY for webinars and podcasts. A mailing went to each farm with COVID-19 phone numbers and weblinks including links to managing stress.

Field Crops Specialist, Kevin Ganoe, officially retired as of June 30. Erik Smith, Ph.D., took over the reins on August 1 as the Regional Field Crops Specialist. Erik comes to CCE with more than 15 years of experience conducting agricultural research and educational outreach as a graduate student and extension professional.

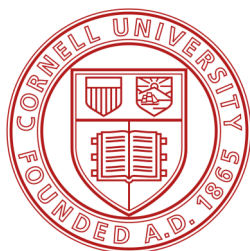
Peter Burritt, Field Technician summer intern, is a junior majoring in agriculture science at Cornell University. His internship was made possible through the Herkimer County College Corps Internship Program. His duties include scouting alfalfa, soybean and corn fields for various pests, weeds and diseases.



Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Herkimer County

**Your Source for Information on
Agriculture, Nutrition, 4-H**

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