Livestock 360°

Southeastern New York Cooperative Extension Livestock News

January 2014 (Volume 1, Issue 1)

In this Issue

Introducing Livestock 360° and the Orange, Sullivan and Ulster County Cooperative Extension Regional Livestock Team

The Cornell Cooperative Extension Commercial Agriculture Programs in Orange, Sullivan and Ulster Counties are joining forces in 2014 to bring enhanced livestock programming to producers in the three-county region. One of the new resources that we are offering this year is Livestock 360° - a monthly newsletter specifically for commercial livestock production in Southeastern New York. We will bring you production tips, advance notice of upcoming programs and events, and current news of interest to local livestock producers. This program is modeled on the recently developed Eastern New York Commercial Horticulture Team, which is serving vegetable and fruit growers.

Leading this effort are the livestock educators for the three counties; Jennifer Simpson, dairy educator from Orange County, Michelle Lipari, livestock educator in Sullivan County with a great deal of experience in pasture-raised pork and poultry, and Erin Campbell-Craven, livestock educator from Ulster County whose area of expertise is mixed species grazing and beef cattle production on pasture. Supporting their work are Maire Ullrich, Elizabeth Higgins and Melinda Meddaugh, the Agriculture Program leaders in Orange, Ulster and Sullivan Counties, who are knowledgeable about farm management, policy, economics and natural resource management. Also providing support to the team is Justin O'Dea of Ulster County, who is a field crops and small grains educator.

We hope that you find this new publication to be useful. Please contact your county office if you have any suggestions for future topics or questions about our programs.

Financial Education & Risk Management for Farm Women

Annie's Project is a series of six workshops for small groups of farm women to learn about risk management topics including:

- ***Farm and Crop Insurance***
- ***Managing Employees***
- ***Developing Budgets & Record Keeping***
- ***Marketing***

The program will be offered at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster and Orange Counties Thursdays, February 6 to March 13, from 9:30 am to 2:00 pm.

The registration deadline has been extended to January 31

The course is $60 per person with a limited amount of scholarships available to those who inquire. Find out more at www.NYAnniesProject.org.

Cornell University Cooperative Extension Orange & Ulster Counties

To learn more about Annie's Project, contact

Elizabeth Higgins, Ulster County or Jennifer Simpson, Orange County

Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Livestock Education Progam
Sullivan, Orange and Ulster Counties

Orange County News

"Healthy Orange Farm to School" Program Recieves $100,000 Grant from USDA

In November USDA announced the award of a $100,000 investment to connect Orange County school cafeterias with Hudson Valley farmers through the USDA "Farm to School" program. The USDA awarded 71 Farm to School grants nationwide and Orange County was one of just two projects awarded in New York State.

The Orange County Department of Health will partner with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Orange County to form the "Healthy Orange Farm to School" program, which connects schools with local farmers, expands and strengthens community partnerships and education programs, and streamlines bidding and procurement processes.

"Cornell Cooperative Extension is looking forward to focusing more time and resources to leveraging our relationship with farmers to carefully match their businesses with schools in Orange County seeking fresh local products," said Maire Ullrich, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Orange County.

Orange County's Healthy Orange Farm to School program will focus on those school districts in Orange County with the highest rate of free and reduced-price school lunches.

USDA Farm to School grants help schools respond to the growing demand for locally sourced foods and increase market opportunities for producers and food businesses, including food processors, manufacturers, and distributors. In school year 2011-2012, school districts purchased and served over $350 million in local food, with more than half of participating schools planning to purchase more local foods in the future.

Orange County Schools, or producers interested in more information about the Healthy Orange Farm to School program, should contact Stiles Najac at (845) 344-1234.

Sullivan County News

Sullivan County Welcomes New Ag Program Leader/Ag Planner Melinda Meddaugh

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Sullivan County would like to introduce our new Ag Leader/ Ag Planner Melinda Meddaugh. Melinda is a long time resident of Sullivan County-growing up in Monticello and graduating from Monticello High School. Melinda currently lives in Rock Hill with her husband Josh Meddaugh.

Melinda received her Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology and Sociology from SUNY Purchase and a Master's Degree in Environmental Law and Policy from Vermont Law School. She also has an Associate's Degree from Sullivan County Community College in Computer Graphics.

Melinda has worked as the Land Protection Coordinator for the Delaware Highlands Conservancy for the past 5 years. In her capacity she worked with landowners on conservation options for their property, farmland protection plans, the Trailkeeper Intiative, the Shop Local, Save Land Initiative, Forestry programming , the legal and outreach ends of conservation easements and land use projects, along with coordinating large scale grant projects.

"I'm looking forward to continuing to work with landowners, our partners and the County I'm from on providing outreach and educational resources and to exploring new ways to work towards supporting the working farms and forests in our region."

Ulster County News

Gill Farm Sale to NoVo Foundation for "Farm Hub"

In December it was announced that the NoVo Foundation had purchased one of the largest farms in Ulster County, Gill Farm. The farm will be operated by the New World Foundation's Local Economies Project as a teaching and research farm.

John Gill, the former farm owner, will be staying on with the New World Foundation as the farm manager. Cornell Cooperative Extension and Cornell University are also working with the New World Foundation on this initiative.


Gill Farm - Photo by John Gill

According to Bob Dandrew, the Director of the Local Economies Project, the foundation will be engaging the public in a master planning process for the property this year to help ensure that it continues to serve the existing farm community and surrounding residents.

One part of the farm will be a farm business incubator which, starting in 2015, will be accepting applicants who are looking for assistance in growing a farm business in the Hudson Valley. The incubator will provide access to affordable land and equipment as well as on-site technical assistance. Successful applicants to the incubator will be likely to come with significant on-farm experience and a strong business plan.

Fleicher's Butcher Shop Transitions to New Owners

On December 27th, in an e-mail notice to their customers, Josh and Jessica Applestone the owners of Fleisher's, a nationally-recognized locavore butcher shop in Kingston and Brooklyn, announced that they were leaving Fleisher's to focus on teaching, consulting, and other new projects.

They have handed Fleisher's reins over to existing staff, Mark Justh, Christophe Hille and Emily Bonilla.

Do You Have Health Insurance Questions?

Many producers are asking about how the Affordable Healthcare Act will impact their businesses. What do they have to do to be in compliance? What will be the fines for non-compliance?

Answers to these and MANY more questions and links to additional agencies for information (such as DOL and IRS) are available at:

http://www.sba.gov/healthcare/

Handy Updated Farm Bureau Publication

FARMER'S GUIDE TO TRUCK & FARM IMPLEMENT LAWS & REGULATIONS, 4th edition

- Learn how the Department of Transportation (DOT) regulations affect you
- Discover the vehicle equipment standards that apply to your vehicles
- Learn the specific requirements of the vehicle equipment regulations in New York State

$30.00 per copy for members and $60.00 per copy for non-members. To order, go to: http://nyfb.org/legal/subpage.cfm?ID=54 or call Farm Bureau at 1-800-342-4143

Dairy Management Through the Lactation Cycle: A 2014 checklist for dairy producers

Calving

- Deliver healthy calf, maintain good appetite, avoid clinical mastitis
- Ideal BCS at calving is 3.50 to 3.75
- DMI is low (1.4 percent of body weight)
- Energy demand can double in first 24 hours
- Examine milk for mastitis
- Disinfect teats before cow is milked

Calving to Peak Milk

- Maximize milk production, increase intake, maintain low incidence of disease
- Cow energy needs increase threefold
- Most metabolic and infectious disease occurs in first 2 weeks
- Weight loss can be 2.25 kg/day
- Excessive fat loss predisposes cow to ketosis
- Reduce environmental stresses
- Provide highly palatable diet
- Use rations that provide most available energy
- Avoid BCS losses in excess of 1 (greater than 100-140lb weight loss).

Peak Milk to Peak Intake

- Reduce time between peak milk and peak intake to 5 or 6 weeks, maintain 90 percent or more of peak production level
- Energy above that needed for maintenance will be used for growth, milk production, and reproduction once positive energy balance is reached; additional energy will replenish body fat
- Keep things constant to minimize loss: consistent diet, animal grouping and cow comfort

Breeding

- Achieve heat detection efficiency above 80 percent, require fewer than 2 services per conception, improve herd genetics
- First ovulation should occur by 40 days postpartum
- Reproductive performance declines when negative energy balance increases
- Focus on heat detection
- Use profit/cow/day as a measure of breeding performance

Breeding to Dry Period

- Attain BCS of 3.50 to 3.75 by dry off, avoid mastitis, enter dry period free from disease
- Remodeling of mammary gland takes place
- Rumen papillae decrease in size and rumen pH increases
- Volatile fatty acid production and absorption decreases
- Treat every quarter with effective dry cow therapy
- Achieve desired BCS by dry-off period
- Trim feet and administer any needed vaccinations

Close-up

- Achieve highly efficient rumen by calving, avoid mastitis
- Maintain intake near 2 percent of body weight
- Nutrient demand increases and feed intake begins to decline
- Low rumen efficiency
- Mastitis susceptibility increases
- Prepare cow for lactating ration by feeding same ingredients now

Dairy Body Condition Scoring and What it Means for Your Herd

Body condition scoring (BCS) is a method of evaluating fatness or thinness in of an animal. Research and field experiments have shown that body condition influences productivity, reproduction, health, and longevity. Poor body condition can be a clue to underlying nutritional deficiencies, health problems, or improper herd management. If done on a regular basis, body condition scoring can be used to troubleshoot problems and improve the health and productivity of your animals. In this issue of Livestock 360° we cover using BCS for dairy cows in this article and for sheep and goats on page 6.

For dairy cows, a BCS scale is used that ranges from a score of 1, which is for cattle that are very thin, to 5, which is for cattle that are excessively fat. Body condition scores will vary from one evaluator to the next. As long as the same individual evaluates the animals each time and that person is consistent in assigning scores to a cow, the information will be very useful. Changes in body condition score are what are important.

When scoring a cow you look at and feel specific parts, including: rump, chine, loin, hips, pins and tail head. Feeling cows who are loose skinned or hairy, to evaluate fat cover, may be necessary because they can appear to have a higher BCS score than they really have. Below are guidelines on how to score your cattle.

continued on the next page

BCS Scoring, continued from page 4

Score of 1

- Individual short ribs have a thin covering of flesh.
- Bones of the chine, loin, and rump regions are prominent.
- Hook and pin bones protrude sharply, with a very thin covering of flesh and deep depressions between bones.
- Severe depression below tail head and between pin bones. Bony structure protrudes sharply, and ligaments and vulva are prominent.

Photo credits, Craig Johnson, ELANCO Animal Health

Score of 2

- Individual short ribs can be felt but are not prominent.
- Ends of ribs are sharp to the touch but have a thicker covering of flesh.
- Short ribs do not have as distinct an "overhanging shelf" effect.
- Individual bones in the chine, loin, and rump regions are not visually distinct but are easily distinguished by touch.
- Hook and pin bones are prominent, but the depression between them is less severe.
- Area below tail head and between pin bones is somewhat depressed, but the bony structure has some covering of flesh.

Score of 3

- Short ribs can be felt by applying slight pressure.
- Altogether, short ribs appear smooth and the overhanging shelf effect is not so noticeable.
- The backbone appears as a rounded ridge; firm pressure is necessary to feel individual bones.
- Hook and pin bones are rounded and smooth.
- Area between pin bones and around tail head appears smooth, without signs of fat deposit.

continued on page 9

New York Beef Farm Business Summary: Cornell Pilot Project is Looking for Producers in 2014

Dairy farms in New York have long been able to benefit from a well-established Dairy Farm Business Summary Program. Participating dairy farms receive a wealth of information:

- **Comparison of production and financial results over time, making it easier to identify an operation's strengths and weaknesses.**
- **Benchmarking of production and financial results against other operations.**
- **Improved financial and production records.**

As the number and size of beef operations grow across the state, it is apparent that we need to develop a similar program for New York beef farmers. Our farming conditions are different from those in other parts of the country, and our farmers need information about how their peformance compares to their peers to help them make good decisions. The only way we're going to get those benchmarks is by working together and pooling information from our individual operations.

2014 will mark the launch of a statewide effort to do just that for beef farms. Mike Baker of Cornell University and more than a dozen CCE offices, including Ulster County, are working together on this effort and will work with beef farmers to develop farm business summaries in early 2014. We hope to complete at least 30 beef farm business summaries across the state, and start developing statewide benchmarks.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Elizabeth Higgins in Ulster County (emh56@cornell.edu) by email, or phone 845-340-3990. Liz will work with you to complete the business summary. We are looking forward to working with beef farmers in our region to develop a new tool that could prove to be of immense value to this sector of our agricultural community and economy.

Make More $$ in 2014 - Form a Dairy Profit Team

NYFVI is now accepting applications from farmers for the Dairy Profit Team program. Profit Teams are teams of professionals (feed consultants, extension agents, veterinarians, etc.), selected by individual farmers, that meet regularly and work together with the farmer to improve the business. Farms that have participated in the Dairy Profit Teams program have achieved significant gains in productivity, profitability, and efficiency.

Participation in the program requires a willingness to provide the team with detailed information on the farm's operations, and an open mind toward making changes based on the team's recommendations. The program requires farmer participants to hold a minimum of seven (7) team meetings over a maximum 15 month period and cover 20 percent of the fees charged by the team, with the balance being paid by the New York Farm Viability Institute, up to $2,500. For more information contact: Profit Team Program Coordinator, Kristin Cleveland, KCleveland@nyfvi.org, (315) 453-3823 x103

Using Body Condition Scoring as at Tool to Assess Nutrition Needs in Late Pregnancy for Sheep and Goats

Another use for body condition scoring (BCS) is to help manage the nutritional needs of pregnant and lactating animals. The amount of nutrients that pregnant ewes or does need to consume the month before birthing and the following three months of lactation, is almost equal to the total amount of nutrients that they need during the other eight months of the year!

Although a pregnant ewe or doe's nutritional needs increase in the last month of gestation, feed intake may also decrease, as the growing young reduces the amount of space available to store digesting feed in the abdominal cavity. If a lower quality forage and/or feed is being fed, the ewe or doe may not be able to consume enough feed to meet her nutritional needs. Likewise, ewes or does with excessive fat stores will also have reduced space available in their abdomen for food digestion. Either situation can lead to a potentially fatal disease known as pregnancy toxemia, in which a too-fat or too-thin doe or ewe is forced to break down her body's fat stores for energy. It is very important to make sure that the quality of the forage and/or feed being fed at this time is high enough to meet the nutritional needs of the pregnant female, but that the animal is also not over fed.

The easiest way to gauge whether an animal may need an increase or decrease in the amount or quality of feed being fed is to evaluate the animal's body condition score – a measure of the available fat resources to be used in times of high stress, like at birthing and during high lactation. Animals are scored from 1 to 5, with an animal scoring 1 being overly thin, and an animal scoring 5 being overly fat. Healthy animals should score from 2.5 to 4. A score of 3.5 at birthing is desirable, so that the animal will have some emergency fat stores to draw upon during peak lactation, when nutritional needs are greatest.

The body condition score, or BCS, of an animal is evaluated by feeling the lumbar vertebrae (lower backbone), the sternum, on the ribs, and in the spaces in between the ribs on the animal to determine the amount of fat cover on the animal. Pregnant ewes and does should be body condition scored at the beginning of the last trimester of pregnancy, 50 days before birthing. Determining a body condition score at this time will help to determine whether feed should be increased, decreased, or stay the same to keep does and ewes at a score of 3.5 until birthing.

A good resource for body condition scoring goats, including picture examples of each score, was developed by Langston University. It is available on-line at http://www.luresext.edu/goats/research/bcshowto.html.

The University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff's Publication **Body Condition Scoring of Sheep** is also a good resource. It is available on line at http://www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/PDF/FSA-9610.pdf

Use your own hand as a cheat sheet to determine the body condition score of an animal.

Press into the fleshy area where the thumb meets the palm, where you have to press hard to feel the bone underneath. This is how an overly fat animal with a body condition score of 4 or 5 will feel.

Now run your fingers across the inside of the palm, right under the fingers. There is adequate fat cover over the bones, but they can still be felt if you press slightly. This is how an animal with a moderate condition score of 3 will feel.

Make a fist and feel along the top of the fingers above the knuckles. The overall feel is fairly smooth, with some cover over the bones. This is how an animal with a slightly thin body condition score of 2 will feel.

Finally, keeping the hand in a fist, feel along the tops of the knuckles, where there is little cover over the bones and each bone can be individually felt. This is how an overly thin animal with a body condition score of 1 will feel.

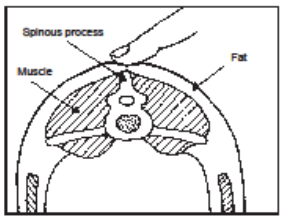


Figure 1.—Feel for the spine in the center of the sheep's back, behind its last rib and in front of its hip bone.

Figures 1-3: University of Oregon Extension "Body condition scoring of sheep" (EC-1433) 1994

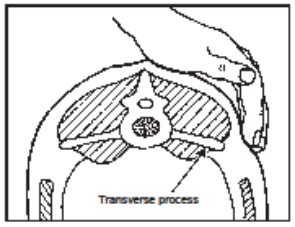


Figure 2.—Feel for the tips of the transverse processes.

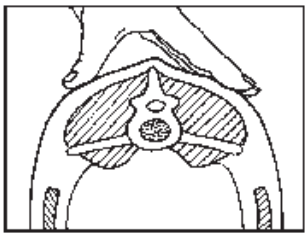


Figure 3.—Feel for fullness of muscle and fat cover.

Getting a Baseline with Soil and Hay Testing

Good soil is the foundation of every good pasture or hay field. It is vital that pastures and hay fields have their soil tested at least every 3 years to determine whether it is necessary to lime or fertilize, based on the pH, organic matter, and nutrient levels in the soil. Liming or fertilizing without first taking a soil test to determine the needs of a pasture or hay field can lead to wasted money spent on unnecessary soil amendments or inadequate nutrients and poor pH levels for optimal growth. Unneeded fertilizing and liming can also negatively impact water quality as excess nutrients will not be taken up by the soil, and will instead run off into streams or ponds. Soil samples should be taken in the spring or fall when the soil is not too wet.

Testing hay to determine the crude protein content, fiber, and total energy, as well as the percentage of dry matter, can be a useful marketing tool for the hay seller. Overall hay quality is impacted by weeds in the hay, maturity at cutting, and water or insect damage due to improper storage. Each batch of hay can differ in quality, so it is important to test routinely. This information is also vital to the livestock producer in formulating feeding rations and determining whether their hay is good enough to meet their livestock's nutritional needs or whether more supplementation in the form of feed will be necessary.

To learn more about soil and hay testing, contact your local Cornell Cooperative Extension Office or sign up today for one or more of the hay education programs to be held this spring in Orange and Ulster Counties. The first class will take place in February and will focus on how to take soil and hay samples, reading the test results, and using those results to decide when to apply fertilizer and lime and how much to apply.

Coming Soon!
Hay Quality Workshop Series

- Do you buy hay or make hay to feed your animals?
- Do you want to be more knowlegeable about hay production and quality?
- Do you want to improve the quality of feed you produce or buy?

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Sullivan, Orange and Ulster Counties are collaborating on a three part hay quality training this year to answer these questions and more!

See the listings in our calendar of events on page 11, or contact one of the livestock educators for more information.

Soil Testing Reminder!

It's that time of year and if you haven't had a recent soil test done on fields you plan to plant in 2014, it's best to get it done now. The recommended gap between tests is 3 years. Most importantly, you need to be sure your pH is on target for your crop to maximize production and decrease certain pest problems.

Check out the Dairy One website to get testing bags/kits. Many Extension offices usually have a supply of kits but call ahead to be sure they have some in stock if you want to pick them up. Payment is due when you send the soil in for analysis. http://www.dairyone.com/

Get off to a good start in 2014 with this handy Swine Management Checklist!

Prebreeding

- Select healthy gilts with good growth and conformation, and with sound feet and legs.
- Select from large litters free of genetic defects. Individuals should have 12 or more evenly spaced teats.
- Use homegrown replacement gilts or disease-free, performance-tested, purchased gilts.
- Select to the practical limit from sow litters. (Gilts from sow litters transmit more disease resistance to their pigs than do gilts from gilt litters).
- Establish vaccination program
- Purchase high ranking, performance-tested boars well ahead of the breeding season.

Breeding

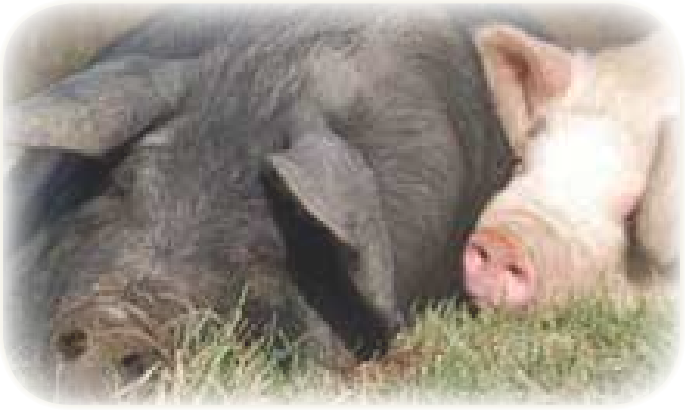
- Breed first week after weaning.
- Plan farrowing number to fit facilities.
- Gilts should be 6 to 8 months old, weigh 250 pounds or more, and should have had at least one heat period before breeding.
- Breed 10 percent more females than you expect to farrow.
- When hand-mating, use two services spaced 12 to 24 hours apart.
- Increase boar's feed during breeding periods, according to his condition.
- Observe the herd closely during breeding — get breeding dates.

Gestation

- Limit-feed sows and boars (4 to 5 pounds per day). Prevent over-fatness. (Sows should gain 75 pounds, gilts 100 pounds).
- Don't expose to other diseased swine.
- Prevent severe stress from all sources. Avoid overheating.
- Three weeks before farrowing treat for internal and external parasites.
- Repeat parasite control one week before farrowing.

Farrowing

- Farrow in clean, disinfected quarters or on clean ground.
- Have necessary medications and equipment on hand to care for sows and pigs.
- Be present when sows farrow or check routinely.
- Examine sows for caked udders.
- Full-feed nursing sows with eight or more pigs.
- Keep farrowing house well ventilated, but dry and free of drafts to reduce scours.
- Dip navel of newborn pigs in iodine.



- Clip needle teeth, ear notch, dock tails, start pig records.
- Keep pigs warm and dry.
- Protect from anemia before third day and at third week if still on concrete.
- Castrate before two weeks of age.
- Offer creep feed and water to baby pigs by seventh day.
- Wean at an age to fit your nursery but at a minimum 12-pound average pig weight.
- Watch for unhealthy litters. Sows may be a disease carrier.

Postweaning to 100 to 125 pounds

- Don't expose to other hogs — use all in - all out.
- Isolate sick pigs.
- Grow on clean ground
- Control internal parasites with medication as needed.
- Use 16 percent protein ration, appropriately medicated, during stress periods.
- Adjust feeders to minimize waste.
- Size pigs by weight. Consider split sex feeding.
- Minimize stress by shade, housing, working pens, water, good nutrition, careful handling, etc.

100 to 125 pounds to market

- Full-feed with adequate feeder and water space.
- Continue preventing feed wastage — this is the critical phase.
- Keep rations adequate but economical.
- Identify a good market and meet its specifications.
- Calculate the shrink to markets and competitive pricing.
- Spot-check for dressing percent and carcass cutout.
- Build a reputation for good hogs, and market on a carcass value program.

Starting a Small Poultry Flock

Although the major supply of eggs and poultry meat in the U.S. is produced by commercial producers, many people prefer to produce their own. Chickens can be raised in a small area and require a minimum of daily care. However, anyone considering small flock production should consider the following before jumping in.

1. Are their zoning restrictions where you would like to raise your poultry?
2. Is there an affordable source of feed available for the type of chickens you will be growing?
3. Do you have suitable housing available for your flock? If no, can you afford to purchase or construct the housing.
4. Do you have a plan to manage the manure? Six 4lb chickens can produce up to 480lbs of manure per year (not including bedding!)
5. Are their facilities available for processing or are you willing to process the birds? Can you process the birds affordably and safely?
6. Is there a market for the product (eggs or meat). If yes, can you raise birds profitably for that market?

Good resources for beginning poultry production include:

- Penn State Cooperative Extension's resources on poultry production http://extension.psu.edu/business/start-farming/livestock/chickens
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension - resources for small scale poultry, including links to service providers, hatcheries and equipment, http://umaine.edu/livestock/poultry/resources/
- University of Virginia Cooperative Extension - poultry resources, including technical guides for manure management and composting. http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/category/poultry.html
- Cornell Cooperative Extension Resource Guide to Direct Marketing Livestock and Poultry http://smallfarms.cornell.edu/resource-guide-to-direct-marketing-livestock-and-poultry/

In addition, we will be offering backyard poultry classes in the region this spring. If you are interested in learning more about backyard poultry, contact Erin Campbell Craven, at eac266@cornell.edu, or your local county extension office, to be included in notifications of upcoming poultry production classes.

Recommended Breeds for Egg and Meat Production

Egg production – White Leghorns, Rhode Island Reds and Buff Orpingtons. These breeds can lay approximately 200 eggs per year per hen.

Meat production – Cornish Cross is a fast growing breed for meat. They can reach 4-5 pounds as a broiler in 6 weeks or 6-10 pounds in 8-12 weeks as a roaster size.

BCS in dairy cattle, continued from page 5

Score of 4

- Individual short ribs are distinguishable only by firm palpation.
- Short ribs appear flat or rounded, with no overhanging shelf effect.
- Ridge formed by backbone in chine region is rounded and smooth.
- Loin and rump regions appear flat.
- Hooks are rounded and the span between them is flat.
- Area of tail head and pin bones is rounded, with evidence of fat deposit.


BCS = 4

Score of 5

- Bony structures of backbone, short ribs, and hook and pin bones are not apparent; subcutaneous fat deposit very evident.
- Tail head appears to be buried in fatty tissue.


BCS = 5

If you have questions about applying body condition scoring to your herd, contact the livestock extension educator in your county.

Producing and Marketing Meat Rabbits

Rabbits are a quick-breeding source of low-fat, high-protein meat and have long been enjoyed as a food by many people across the world. Until 1960s, rabbit was also popular in the United States. U.S. Ag Census data shows that rabbit production is up. In 2002, more than 4,300 farms sold nearly 890,000 rabbits (NASS 2009). By 2007, those numbers had increased to more than 27,000 farms raising rabbits and more than 6,800 farms selling nearly 980,000 rabbits. These data do not capture the number produced in backyards for personal consumption (NASS 2009).

Production

The two most common types used for meat production are New Zealand whites and Californians. Rabbits respond to light and are sensitive to both extreme temperatures and moldy food so an initial investment in well-ventilated and illuminated housing is essential. Control of disease is very important. Rabbit hemorrhagic disease, which does not affect humans, can wipe out an entire unvaccinated population of rabbits, and there are other diseases such as myxamatosis and pasteurellosis that must be avoided as well.

Two good resources for starting a commercial rabbit production business are:

- Commercial Rabbit Production, Mississippi State University http://www.poultry.msstate.edu/pdf/extension/rabbit_production.pdf
- Agricultural Alternatives: Rabbit Production, Penn State University http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/freepubs/pdfs/ua274.pdf

Marketing Considerations

Rabbit has appeal across many ethnic markets, but developing a local market may be challenging as many meat eaters may be squeamish about consuming an animal that is considered a pet. Therefore, although it is possible for two people to maintain a herd of up to 1,000 does, rabbits have a slim profit margin and producers are advised to start small - with no more than 20 does - using rabbits as a supplemental income source while they are establishing their market.

National Monthly Grass Fed Beef Report (November 2013) Wholesale and Direct Market Prices

GRASS FED BEEF - Wholesale	($/lb)
Chuck Roll	3.03 - 4.99
Ribeye, Boneless, Whole	9.70 - 11.99
Tenderloin, Whole	15.07 - 21.99
Striploin, Whole	9.70 - 12.99
Top Sirloin Butt, Whole	5.58 - 8.99
Round Cut	4.11 - 4.89
Top Round, Inside	3.03 - 4.99
Bottom Round	4.28 - 4.99
Eye of Round	4.28 - 6.99
Brisket, Whole	4.24 - 5.99
Short Ribs	4.99 - 5.58
Flank Steak	6.61 - 8.49
Skirt Steak	6.61 - 7.49
Hanger Steak	5.49 - 9.99
85/15 Bulk Trim, 20 lb Vac Pack	2.86 - 4.49
70/30 Ground Beef, 5 lb Vac Pack	2.25 - 3.99
85/15 Ground Beef, 5 lb Vac Pack	2.86 - 4.59
90/10 Grnd Bf, 1 lb Vac Pk, 40/case	4.19 - 4.99
90/10 Ground Beef, 4/1 lb Patties	4.19 - 6.99
Beef Liver, 5 lb Vac Pac	1.49 - 2.99
Beef Heart, 5 lb Vac Pac	1.49 - 2.99
Beef Tongue, 5 lb Vac Pac	1.49 - 3.15

GRASS FED BEEF -Direct	($/lb)	Avg ($/lb)
Chuck Roast	5.75 - 10.75	7.99
Ribeye Steak	12.67 - 37.99	17.39
Tenderloin	15.99 - 33.56	26.58
Striploin Steak	14.25 - 31.12	21.41
Sirloin Roast	6.66 - 13.39	9.07
Round Roast	5.75 – 9.75	7.78
Filet Mignon	22.00 - 42.00	29.94
Sirloin Steak	7.06 - 22.98	14.75
Flat Iron Steak	7.75 - 20.00	13.94
Tri Tip Steak	12.00 - 21.54	15.53
Skirt Steak	7.77 - 26.66	11.88
Flank Steak	6.66 - 19.00	13.00
Short Ribs	4.00 - 7.81	6.75
Rib Roast	9.88 - 18.99	14.51
Brisket	6.66 - 11.80	8.31
Rump Roast	7.25 - 10.00	8.17
Back Ribs	4.86 - 6.99	5.93
Stew Meat	5.99 - 15.99	8.88
Ground Beef, 90/10, Bulk	5.75 - 10.00	8.00
Ground Beef, 85/15, Bulk	5.25 - 9.99	7.28
Ground Beef, 75/25, Bulk	6.77 - 13.33	8.99
Frankfurters	6.49 - 13.33	8.58
Beef Shanks	5.99 - 12.00	8.15
Oxtails	3.00 - 6.95	4.71

Source: USDA Market News Service, Des Moines, IA

Date(s)		Program Information	Time	Location (s)	To Register
February					
Feb 6-Mar 10 (6 consectutive Thursdays)	Annie's Project: Farm Business Management for Women in Agriculture	Annie's Project embodies a risk management perspective that helps to reduce risk exposure by analyzing legal, human resource, marketing, financial, and production factors in farm business decision making.	9:30am - 2:00pm	2 sites in the region: CCE Orange County, Middletown, NY and CCE Ulster County, Kingston, NY	www.NYAnniesProject.org or call Elizabeth Higgins at (845) 340-3990 or emh56@cornell.edu
Feb 11-13 (will also be held in June)	Basic Dairy Science & Sanitation Workshop	This workshop is designed to help participants understand the basic principles of dairy science and safety, as well as the needs of their dairy processing establishment with regard to dairy sanitation to help ensure that proper programs are conducted in their establishment.	8:00am- 5:00pm, first two days. Ends at noon 3rd day.	Cornell University Campus, Ithaca, NY	http://foodscience.cornell.edu/cals/foods-ci/extension/extension-calendar.cfm
Feb 11-13	Hudson Valley Comercial Fruit Growers School	The first 2 days will be devoted to issues related to tree fruit. The third day will cover small fruit issues.	8:00am-5:00pm (Trade show on the 11th from 4pm-7:00pm)	Garden Plaza Hotel (former Holiday Inn) in Kingston, NY	For more information contact Marcie Vohnoutka 518-272-4210 or email mmp74@cornell.edu or register at http://rvpadmin.cce.cornell.edu/pdf/event/pdf167_pdf.pdf
Feb 16	CCE-Sullivan Community Supported Agriculture and Restaurant Supported Agriculture Trade Show and Conference	Anyone interested in buying local food for their business or family for the 2014 season is urged to attend. Connect directly with producers of locally grown meats, vegetable, dairy and value-added products through a CSA or direct delivery. Exhibitors from throughout the Hudson Valley, Catskill Region and PA	9:30am - 3:30pm	CCE Sullivan County Office, Liberty, NY	none
Feb 17	Dairy Day/Ag Day	Opportunity for the farming community to come learn and interact with new technology and numerous vendors in the Agri-business community of Wayne, Sullivan and the surrounding counties.	10:00am-3:00pm	Honesdale High School, off Terrace Street, Honesdale, PA	Michelle Lipari at mml249@cornell.edu or the CCE-SC office at 845-292-6180
Feb 18	Intro to Backyard Chickens	1st class n a series for anyone interested in starting a backyard flock. Will cover town ordinances on poultry-keeping, selecting breeds, housing and equipment, nutrition, health, predator control, and more. All ages welcome.	6:30pm-8:00pm	CCE Ulster County Office, Kingston, NY	Erin Campbell-Craven at 845-340-3990 or eac266@cornell.edu
Feb 21-Mar 7 (3 consecutive Fridays)	Quicken Class for Farmers	This workshop series is designed and targeted to those that have little or no knowledge of using Quickbooks. After taking this workshop, you will have a beginning working knowledge of this useful computer program, set up a chart of accounts, how to automate the recording of receipts and expenses and to generate useful financial reports to monitor and track your business	12:00pm - 3:30pm	CCE Ulster County Office, Kingston, NY	Elizabeth Higgins at emh56@cornell.edu or 845-340-3990
Feb 22	Feedstuff Identification and Ration Making (Youth Program)	Come see the different types of feed you can combine in order to give your animal the nutrition they need	10:00am-12:00pm	Orange County (location to be determined)	Jennifer Simpson at 845-344-1234 or jks236@cornell.edu
Feb 24	Hay and Soil Management	First class in a new hay and forage management series! We will cover: renovating old hayfields; soil testing - how to take samples, read results and apply results to fields; hay testing and why you should do it; how to apply lime and fertilizer to your fields; and seed varieties for hay and forage.	10:00am-12:00pm (Orange) 5:30pm-7:30pm (Sullivan)	CCE Orange County Office, Middletown, NY and CCE Sullivan County Office, Liberty, NY	Jennifer Simpson at 845-344-1234 or jks236@cornell.edu for Orange County, Michelle Lipari for CCE Sullivan County
Feb 24	Hudson Valley Commercial Vegetable Grower's School	DEC Recertification Credits! Review of pests and diseases from 2013 and recommendations for 2014. Tomato variety trials and garlic post-harvest management results.	8:45am-4:00pm	The Falcon, 1348 Route 9W, Marlboro, NY 12542	Teresa Rusinek at 845-340-3990 or tr28@cornell.edu. Register on-line at http://cvp.cce.cornell.edu/event_preregistration.php?event=171
Feb 25	Hay and Soil Management	Repeat of class on the 24th, but in Ulster County.	5:30pm-7:30pm	CCE Ulster County Office, Kingston, NY	Erin Campbell-Craven at 845-340-3990 or eac266@cornell.edu
March					
Mar 3 and Mar 11	Day-old Pheasant Chick Program Registration deadline (Mar 3)and Raising Pheasants 101 class (Mar 11)	For those interested in the 4-H pheasant rearing project, this is a class on how to care for pheasant chicks. To register for the "Raising Pheasants 101" program on March 11th please call 292-6180. To order the chicks, the deadline is March 3.	6:00pm-8:00pm (Mar 11)	CCE Sullivan County Office, Liberty, NY	call 845-292-6180 or e-mail Michelle Lipari at mml249@cornell.edu
Mar 7	NOFA NY Organic Dairy and Field Crop Conference	We welcome veteran farmers, beginning farmers, and farmers interested in transitioning to organic management.	8:00am-5:30pm	Holiday Inn, 75 North Street, Auburn, NY	http://www.nofany.org/dairyconference stephanie@nofany.org
Mar 13-14	Organic Pesticide Applicator Training	Pesticide applicator training specifically for organic growers. Will cover equipment, regulations, safety, organic product overview and efficacy. DEC Recertification Credits!	9:00am-4:00pm	NYAES Hudson Valley Lab, 3357 Rt. 9W, Highland, NY	Emily Cook, 845-943-9810 or e-mail ekc68@cornell.edu

Continued on next page

Date(s)		Program Information	Time	Location (s)	To Register
Mar 25, 27 and Apr 1, 3, 8, 22, 25 and 26.	Ulster County 4-H Tractor Safety Certification Course for Teens (Youth Program)	This National Safe Tractor Training Program enables young workers (ages 14-19) to obtain a US Department of Labor Certificate of Training certification which is required to operate farm tractors and equipment.	7pm for course (Mar 25-Apr 8)	Stone Ridge Firehouse, Route 209, Stone Ridge, NY	For more information or to register, contact Kristin Frangione, at 845-340-3990
Mar 28-29	Animal Career Path Program: Dairy Discovery (Youth Program)	The annual Dairy Discovery Program provides New York youth (14-19) with fun, hands-on science-oriented learning experiences on dairy production and management topics which feature the unique facilities, industry professionals, and staff of Cornell University. This year's program focuses on Herd Health.	6:15pm-9:00pm Friday and 8:15am-4:00pm Saturday (main program)	Cornell University campus , Ithaca, NY	Contact your county 4-H office or register on-line at http://www.ansci.cornell.edu/4H/php/4H_register.php?action=order&icourse=4HDAIRY
Mar 29	Herd Health and Calf Health (Youth Program)	In Herd Health we will go over body condition scoring, lameness scoring, common post-partum diseases, and mastitis. In Calf Health we will go over calf health and immunity, vaccination schedules and common diseases.	10:00am-12:00pm	Indian Acres Dairy, Port Jervis, NY	Jennifer Simpson at 845-344-1234 or jks236@cornell.edu
April					
Apr 11	Hay, Balage, and Forage Quality Workshop	Second class in the new hay and forage management series. Learn to better manage your hay crop for quality and value with Cornell Cooperative Extension. Whether you are a seasoned veteran or a new farmer, this class is for you! An in-depth school on producing and marketing hay and balage; and feeding forage to beef, sheep, goats, horses, and alpaca to maximize livestock performance.	10:00am-1:00pm	3 sites: CCE Sullivan County, Liberty, NY; CCE Ulster County, Kingston, NY; & CCE Orange County, Middletown, NY	For more information: Contact the livestock educators in Ulster, Sullivan or Orange County.
Apr 19	Milking (Youth Program)	There is a lot to think about when milking a cow if you are not familiar with the process. We will go over the parts to a milking machine, milking procedures, and mastitis	10:00am-12:00pm	Orange County, location to be determined	Jennifer Simpson at 845-344-1234 or jks236@cornell.edu
Apr (dates TBD) 2-day class	On-Farm and Manure Composting School	In collaboration with the Cornell Waste Management Institute this 2 day course will cover manure composting basics, mortality composting, structures and facilities for composting, bedding sources when composting horse manure, use of compost as a soil/crop growth amendment, compost for organic farming, marketing compost, assessing compost quality, practical considerations when developing compost facilities; NYDEC regulations	TBD	TBD	For more information: Contact the livestock educators in Ulster, Sullivan or Orange County.

Contact Information

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Sullivan County
Jerry Skoda Education Center
64 Ferndale-Loomis Rd
Liberty, NY 12754
(845) 292-6180
Michelle Lipari, Livestock Educator - mml249@cornell.edu
Melinda Meddaugh, Agriculture Program Leader - mm2592@cornell.edu

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Orange County
18 Seward Ave, Ste. 300
Middletown, NY 10940
(845) 344-1234
Jennifer Simpson, Dairy and Field Crop Educator - jks236@cornell.edu
Maire Ullrich, Agriculture Program Leader - mru2@cornell.edu

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County
232 Plaza Rd.
Kingston, NY 12401
(845) 340-3990
Erin Campbell Craven, Livestock Educator - eac266@cornell.edu
Justin O'Dea, Field Crops Educator - jko32@cornell.edu
Elizabeth Higgins, Agriculture Program Leader - emh56@cornell.edu

Blast from the Past
Cornell Recommendations from 1923

Did you know a ton of red or alsike clover has 163 pounds of digestible protein, alfalfa 212, and soy bean hay 234, while of the non leguminous hays, timothy has 60 pounds a ton, redtop 90, orchard grass and Kentucky bluegrass 94, Canada bluegrass 54, and corn stover has 42 pounds of digestible protein per ton?

Growing legumes will enable you to reduce the cost of purchased feed, since the protein is the most expensive part of it. At the same time the manure produced will be richer in the essential fertilizing constituents. Growing legumes is better for the cow as well as for the land. Let's sweeten New York's sour soils to grow more and better legumes in 1923.