

# DAIRY 2024: A Salute to the Dairy Industry



Photo provided by Dairy Diaries

Vanessa Bayer, a Saturday Night Live alumna, spent a week at Beck Farm in Freeville, filming a documentary that's now streaming on Roku.

## City cow, country cow

Beck Farm stars in docu-series hosted by Saturday Night Live alum

By LILY BYRNE  
Staff Reporter  
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FREEVILLE — Even television stars wonder about the food they eat.

Vanessa Bayer, a longtime cast member of Saturday Night Live, spent a week at Beck Farms in Freeville learning about the dairy industry for her docu-series "Dairy Diaries," which is now streaming.

Beck Farms is a fourth-generation, 2,000-cow dairy farm located in Freeville. They also have a satellite farm, Alpine Dairy, in Virgil. They were selected out of 80 farms for the series, after weeks of Zoom interviews and an in-person visit by producers, said co-owner Austin Beck.

"We were told they were looking for a family-established farm through the generations," he said. "They were looking for something sizable but not too big, and something that was progressive. I think the other draws were the geography, our ties to Cornell, and the milk plant."

"As someone who consumes more dairy, and specifically cheese, than I'd like to admit, I wanted to learn about how milk gets from the farm to the store," Bayer said in a news release. "I was particularly interested to hear how the industry is working to become more sustainable be-



Lily Byrne/Staff Reporter

A day-old calf lies down at Beck Farm. The filming team of Dairy Diaries loved the calf barn, Austin Beck said.

cause obviously, we all gotta get moo-ving in that department!"

"It really started with my brother and I throwing it out there, like 'OK, we'll put our name in,' and then as it got closer we had the real conversation of 'They could be here,' and 'Is that really what we want?'" Austin Beck said.

A production crew of 60 spent a week at the farm, filming from 6 a.m. to dusk, Beck said. It was difficult, because on a farm all of the same work must be done every day, regardless of the film crew.

"Their primary goal was to have a vision of milk as a product from the start to the very end," he said. "They wanted to see it from feeding a cow, to milking a cow, to taking the milk to the milk plant and processing

it. They also wanted to see the manure, the byproduct, how we use the nutrients on the farm in a cycle."

"It's just bringing two polar opposite industries together," co-owner Tyler Beck said. "You literally had 50 people straight out of Hollywood implanted here in a dairy farm in upstate New York. It was like the city mouse and country mouse."

While on the farm, Bayer read cow facts to the cows, and tried each type of feed.

"While I didn't get as much free ice cream as I had hoped, I learned a lot, and I think the audience will as well," Bayer said in the release.

It was an interesting week for all, because the Beck

brothers, in turn, got to learn about the film industry, Austin Beck said.

"It's a different take on education," he said. "A lot of documentaries focus on the education part, and they don't include a lot of comedy in there. We thought it was an interesting point of view to include Vanessa as a comedian to come in here and share our story while adding the comedy in. The scale of the opportunity to get the word out there we thought was kind of important, which is why

we were so interested in the project."

"It's on Roku now, and with streaming you're not allowed to add comments, which is good because some people have really strong opinions on the dairy industry," Tyler Beck said. "Now, they can just look at the material. It's very clean-cut. Eventually, it'll probably be uploaded to YouTube."

"They wanted to see how, in a sustainable way, we recycle and have a closed loop here on the farm," Austin Beck said.

The closed-loop process includes using manure to grow feed. With more sustainable and innovative farming practices, producing a gallon of milk now requires 30% less water, 21% less land and a 19% smaller carbon footprint than it did in 2007, the news release says.

Another sustainable technology they use is a SCR Heptime HR System, which Austin Beck describes as "Fitbit for cows." It tracks each cow's activity, food intake, production and when they are in heat.

The brothers have heard some feedback on the docu-series from friends and other people in the industry, Austin Beck said.

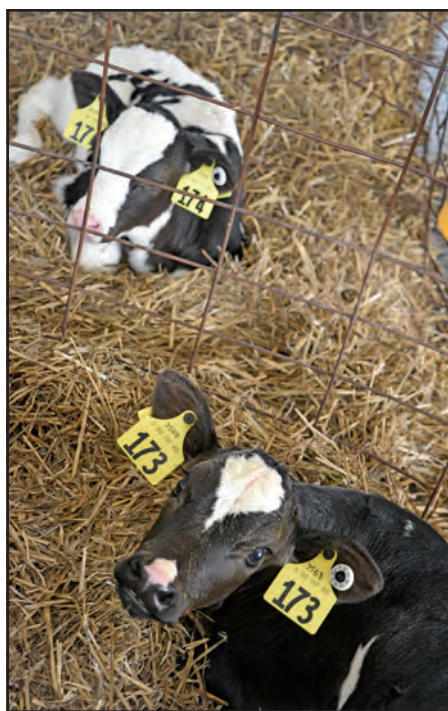
"It's kind of cool that people are finding it," he

### HOW YOU CAN WATCH

"Dairy Diaries" is streaming exclusively on the Roku Channel in the U.S. It can be viewed on a Roku device, the Roku mobile app, therokuchannel.com, Samsung Smart TV, Amazon Fire TV and Google TV.

said. "We want to reach the non-dairy industry, and it's doing it slowly."

"People forget that just because we're classified as a large farm, they think that we aren't local anymore," he said. "In reality, we might be 2000 cows, but our milk goes to our milk plant in Auburn, and doesn't go much further than that. People forget that larger farms are still family farms. We contribute to the local economy, with all of our employees and all that we buy. You have to be big to survive; you can't be 200 cows and compete in this market."



Lily Byrne/Staff Reporter

Two calves, one day old, relax at the calf barn of Beck Farm.

Lily Byrne/Staff Reporter  
Austin Beck, left, and Tyler Beck run Beck Farm, which has been in their family for generations.



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# Dairy Parade adapts and returns June 4 from North Main Street to fairgrounds

From Staff Reports

The parade has had to adapt in many ways over the past few years, but the Cortland County Dairy Parade will return June 4 in a route that takes it from North Main Street toward the Cortland County Fairgrounds.

The parade steps off at 6:30 p.m. rain or shine from 75 N. Main St., the Pudgie's Pizza near Arthur Avenue and Grant Street. From there, it will head west to Homer Avenue, then turn north toward the fairgrounds in the town of Cortlandville.

Organizers are still gathering participants, but did say

the Cortland County Junior Fair Board will open its food booth, offering hamburgers, pulled pork, sausage patties, chicken tenders, hot dogs, fries and more. Proceeds will benefit the Cortland County Junior Fair which runs from July 9 to 13.

"The Cortland County Fair board is honored to support the Cortland June Dairy Parade this year. Our main goal is to help all participants to have a safe and enjoyable Dairy Parade," the board states in a release. Its property will allow unloading of the floats at the end of the parade, and parking, too.

This is the second time the parade has followed this route

— it used this route in 2022 — both times because of ongoing construction on Main Street.

The parade was canceled in 2023 because of poor air quality caused by Canadian wildfires. It was also canceled in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, the parade took a unique turn: a reverse parade. The floats, bands and other participants lined up on both sides of south Main Street and viewers could either walk or drive down the street. That was done to allow social distancing, preventing clusters of people from potentially exposing each other to COVID-19.



Kevin T. Conlon/file photo

Participants ride a float in the 2022 Cortland County Dairy Parade. The parade returns June 4 after a one-year hiatus.

But that's not this year. If you're looking for a good vantage point, the Homer Avenue Plaza has a good deal of space, but though the lot has parking, keep in mind the street will be closed to traffic, so you'd have to arrive early and stay awhile. The fairgrounds also has parking, and an easier egress on Fisher Avenue.

On the other end of the route, West Main Street offers easy access, as does Madison Street to the west and Grant Street to the east.

Homer Avenue south of the route has a number of access points, but remember that Gorton Avenue is torn up for reconstruction.

## First draft Farm Bill: Senate plan boosts margin coverage for dairy farmers

By ALEX GAULT  
Watertown Daily Times

Congress is putting together a new version of the Farm Bill, a wide-ranging package of legislation that sets agricultural and food policy for the U.S., typically in five-year increments.

The last Farm Bill passed in 2018, and was temporarily extended under those 2018 terms last year, but lawmakers in the House and Senate agriculture committees have been working on new terms, aimed at updating

policy for current conditions, for the last few months.

The House Agriculture Committee, run by Republicans, plans to release the text of its version of the bill by the end of May; the Senate Agriculture Committee, run by Democrats, released its version on May 1.

Called the "Rural Prosperity and Food Security Act," the Senate version combines more than 100 bills from both parties. The legislation includes a plan to strengthen government assistance programs for failing or under per-

forming farms, closes loopholes in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program that kept people from benefiting from its work training programs, funds a health food initiative aimed at making healthy foods more accessible to those receiving food benefits, and special programs aimed at boosting the dairy industry.

For dairy farmers, the bill adds funding to the Dairy Margin Coverage Program, a risk management program that provides cash to enrolled farmers when the difference between the federally set price of milk and the average cost of feed falls below a certain point.

Preliminary numbers provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture indicate the program paid out \$1.23 billion to 17,096 enrolled dairy farms in 2023.

Of that, New York received \$119.3 million for 1,820 enrolled farms, about 73% of the total number of dairy farms in the state. New York has the second-highest number of DMC-enrolled farms, with Wisconsin tallying 4,200 dairy farms and more than \$277 million in payments last year.

Last year, in June and July, the margins calculated by the DMC dropped to their lowest levels on record in June and July, when the margin between feed and the all-milk price passed the \$4 mark. Every single farm enrolled in the program received payments in those months.

The Senate's proposed Farm Bill will ask all participating dairy farmers to update their production history to better account for the economics of their farms, and provides a 25% discount on the program's premium costs when a farmer enrolls for five years.

The bill would also require the USDA to conduct a mandatory plant cost study every two years to keep milk prices up to date, and requires the agency to collect more and better data on the organic dairy market.

Other crop insurance programs are also getting more attention, including expanding insurance programs at discounted rates for first-time farmers and ranchers just starting their businesses, and a Specialty Crop Insurance Advisory Committee,

to be made up of farmers with experience in specialty crop farming, to create and adapt insurance programs.

The bill also creates an Office of Small Farms in the USDA, which will craft federal policy and assist specifically small, family-owned farms.

Sen. Kirsten E. Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, said during a recent news conference that she is happy to see the provisions.

"New York is home to more than 30,000 farms, our state is the largest producer of yogurt and cottage cheese in the nation," she said. "We are also among the top producers of milk, apples and grapes. Dairy and specialty farming is enormously important to our state's economy."

The bill also includes a number of social safety net adjustments, including adding an exemption for SNAP work training program participants to make sure the payment they're getting from that work training program is not counted against their eligibility for SNAP itself.

Gillibrand has advocated for years to close this loophole.

"Right now, wages earned through these training programs are counted as income, which counts against SNAP eligibility," she said. "That means a SNAP beneficiary could get kicked off SNAP benefits just from participating in these programs. That's unacceptable."

The details of the House bill are more vague, but an outline provided by House Agriculture Committee Chair Glenn Thompson (R-Pa.) indicates the House bill, led primarily by Republicans, includes some of the same provisions as the Senate version, including reauthorizing the DMC program. It also lays out a number of protectionist measures, some also included in the Senate version, like a block on the use of federal aid to support foreign-owned farms.

Rep. Marcus J. Molinaro (R-Tivoli), one of two House Agriculture Committee members from New York, said in a statement he's had listening sessions and 11 town halls across his district, which includes Cortland

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## How to involve more young people in agriculture

The agricultural industry will undergo exciting changes as it looks to overcome developing challenges in the decades ahead. Technology will continue to play a pivotal role in the agricultural sector, making agriculture an evolving and exciting career path for young professionals.

Much has been made of projections that suggest the world population is increasingly looking to urban areas to call home. Though data from the United Nations indicates urban areas could grow by 2.5 billion people by 2050, more recent UN data indicates that 90 percent of that increase will take place in Asia and Africa. All told, estimates indicate that rural areas will re-

main home to 3.1 billion people by 2050.

A sizable rural population and the challenges climate change and population growth will present underscores how important the agricultural sector will be in the coming decades. That means there should be plenty of opportunities for young people to make an impact, especially if more efforts are made to encourage them to consider careers in agriculture.

Encourage agriculture-based curriculum. After recognizing that the majority of Kenyan students had no access to farming training and education, the organization Farm Africa initiated a program to make agriculture more accessible to

students. Students who participated learned about everything from keeping livestock to marketing produce for global markets. Similar programs can be encouraged in developed countries where opportunities in the field of agriculture figure to increase in the years to come.

Emphasize technological advancements in the field. Modern young people are growing up with technology all around them, but few may be aware of the vital role technology plays in the agricultural sector. Young people's ears may perk up upon hearing terms like "robotics" technologies are now a big part of life on the farm. Recognition of that may com-

pel more young people to pursue careers in agriculture.

Highlight the challenges ahead and how agricultural professionals can help overcome them. UN projections indicate the global population will grow by more than two billion people by 2050. Finding a way to feed all of those people in the face of climate change will be no small task, but it's a task that will require dedicated agricultural professionals. Educators and parents can emphasize these challenges when speaking to young people about a career in the agricultural sector, noting that such careers will present real opportunities to make a difference.

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## Interesting facts about ice cream

Perhaps no food is as universally beloved as ice cream. Though people may dispute which ethnic cuisine reigns supreme or which region produces the most delicious barbecue or which city makes the best pizza, ice cream inspires no such debate. It's simply loved by people of all ages and from all walks of life.

Ice cream is a go-to dessert for people across the globe, and those individuals may be interested in learning more about this beloved confection.

The International Dairy Foods Association notes that the origins of ice cream can be traced at least as far back as the second century BC. Though the precise origins of ice cream are not known, the first ice cream parlor in the United States opened in 1790. PBS notes that President George Washington was especially fond of the frozen treat.

Many people prefer their ice cream served in cones, and they can thank any one of a number of individuals who may be responsible for the invention of

the ice cream cone. According to the Library of Congress, various accounts suggest Charles E. Menches is the inventor of the ice cream cone, which he first offered for sale at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904. Ernest Hamwi, Abe Doumar, Albert and Nick Kabbaz, Arnold Fornachou, and David Avayou are some others who have been credited with inventing the ice cream cone.

The Dairy Alliance reports that three gallons of milk are required to produce a single gallon

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# Tripling growth

*Trinity Valley plans to expand production, but that means delayed opening for store*

By DOUG SCHNEIDER  
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Trinity Valley Dairy is busy installing new equipment, adding space and making other changes to triple its production.

The Homer dairy still plans to reopen its retail store in a new location, but the re-opening has been pushed off.

The retail store included the dairy's low-temperature pasteurized milk products, local meats and other groceries — and a corn maze in the fall. It closed in 2023 to prepare for a new location closer to Cortland. It had planned to open this summer, but its owners, the Browns, indefinitely delayed the reopening date to expand the dairy operation.

The company has already renovated a farmhouse into a bed and breakfast at the site it purchased in 2022 — 1737?1739 Route 13, east of Locust Avenue in Cortlandville, near Onondaga-Cortland-Madison BOCES' Cortland campus — and plans to build a new store there.

The original site is being re-purposed to expand operations, but there was concrete that needed pouring, and new milk-processing machinery to

be installed. Once installation is finished, said Branden Brown, who operates the dairy with wife Rebekah, "we should be able to triple our production."

In the meantime, you can still buy its made cheese curds and other dairy products at the Wegmans in Ithaca — or at a Wegmans in Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo — or those in North Carolina. Or even the suburbs of Boston.

Or if you'd prefer a gallon of "Creamline" milk, check out a number of groceries, including the "Pics" private-label milk sold at Price Chopper stores. You can find its milk at The Local Store, Bill Brothers, CP Cash and Carry, P&C and Grand Union, too.

And 25 stores from Cortland to Binghamton to the Syracuse suburbs sell half-gallons of Trinity Valley's mint chocolate milk.

All this is the work of a former electrical worker, whose wife (a former nursing student) and their four children under 11 — and a handful of more-distant family members (and a few non-family members) operate Trinity Valley Dairy — and a bottling operation — off Route 13 in East Homer.

The couple met when Branden had a seasonal job at Labrador

Mountain ski area in Truxton; Rebekah's grandmother also worked at Labrador, and kept telling him about her wonderful granddaughter. Branden and Rebekah began dating in 2009 and married in December 2012.

Today, they manage a herd of 60 Jerseys and 80 Holsteins, in addition to raising four children at the dairy. The couple has purchased a second farm — near the McEvoy Campus of Onondaga Cortland Madison Board of Cooperative Educational Services on Route 13 in Cortlandville.

The farm they run was originally known as the Sunset Young Farm. It stayed in the family before passing to Rebekah's parents, Ken and Sue Poole, who raised her on the farm.

"My two boys love the equipment side of things," Branden said. "I love the cows, and my daughter loves the cows."

It is a family farm in every sense of the word. Besides the farm having been in the Young family for a couple generations, their social media person, Lindsay Frye-Young, is a relative who lives a couple doors down Route 13.

After launching the dairy in 2013, the couple converted a field of sweet corn into the site of a general store. There, they

sold honey, beef, produce and local maple syrup and baked goods. People commenting online rave about the baked goods.

Over the past decade, the couple has expanded their herd to 140 cattle, opened two rental properties — an 1820 farmhouse and a loft property, both in Cortlandville, that Rebekah runs.

"The accountant told us 'You'll never make it,' Branden said. "It was a total risk. My wife was 18 and I was 23, full of energy — and a little stupidity."

Now that the dairy is off to a good start, he adds: "We love being in a community that loves dairy farming."

Today, the cattle enjoy a barn where they sleep on sawdust-covered mattresses, and eat grain that is periodically swept into neat piles that are easily within reach of the bovines.

Not everybody is blessed to live on a farm, said Branden, who left an electrical job in the Syracuse area to switch to a business he'd grown up around. Rebekah was raised as a "farm kid."

Each of their children loves life on the farm, though Branden says he and his wife want their children to feel no pressure to take over the farm when their parents approach retirement.

## 7 ways to enjoy more dairy

Dairy benefits the body in various ways. Those who may be wondering how to incorporate more dairy into their diets and/or individuals who have been advised to do so by a doctor or nutritionist can consider these handy tips.

1. Sprinkle on some cheese. Cheese has less lactose than other dairy products, making it easier on the stomach for those who may have issues consuming dairy. Consider sprinkling some parmesan cheese on an apple or popcorn for an afternoon snack, or have an ounce of cheddar with a small portion of nuts for calcium and protein.
2. Top off meals. Fruit salads, oatmeal or even a baked potato can be enhanced with low-fat yogurt instead of other fat-heavy or sugary toppings like whipped or sour creams.
3. Add milk to coffee. While some people simply like the taste of coffee served black, adding milk to one's morning or afternoon brew is an easy

way to get a serving of dairy each day.

4. Finish your morning milk. Add a full serving of milk to that bowl of cereal. When the cereal is gone, sip the rest of the milk for a sweet treat.
5. Try evaporated milk. Heavy cream can add five grams of fat and 50 calories in just one tablespoon. In lieu of heavy cream, opt for fat-free evaporated milk in soups and other recipes that call for cream. Evaporated milk provides the creaminess of dairy without the excessive calories.
6. Try a kefir smoothie. Fermented kefir has roughly 15 to 20 times as many probiotics as yogurt. Probiotics benefit gut health, so substitute kefir in place of yogurt when making smoothies and other dairy drinks for a healthy boost.
7. Swap your spread. Switch out mayonnaise or mustard on sandwiches for yogurt or ricotta cheese. Add herbs or lemon juice to dairy to amp up flavor.

## INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT ICE CREAM

• from Page A2

of ice cream. That means one cow can produce between two and three gallons of ice cream per day.

- Ice cream aficionados span the globe, but the World Atlas reports that no country consumes more ice cream per capita than New Zealand. New Zealand is reportedly renowned for producing high-quality dairy products, which might be one reason why the average New Zealander consumes 28.4 liters of ice cream per year. The United States (20.8 liters per year per person) and Australia (18 liters) are next in line behind New Zealand.
- Chocolate reigns supreme as the most popular ice cream

flavor in the world. So says an analysis of data from Lexham Insurance conducted by The Food Channel®. That data represents figures from 121 countries and found that vanilla, mint chocolate chip, cookie dough, and buttered pecan round out the top five ice cream flavors across the globe.

- According to Ben & Jerry's, the new ice cream texture that develops after a pint melts and then re-freezes is the result of microscopic air bubbles that keep ice cream soft and fluffy. That air escapes when ice cream melts, and since it's gone when the ice cream refreezes, the result is a product that's no longer as soft as it was intended to be.



Margaret Mellott/Staff Reporter

Dandelion can expect to be part of Trinity Valley's future as the Homer dairy plans to triple production of its low-temperature pasteurized products. However, that means delaying the re-opening of the company's retail store.

## The relationship between milk and health

"Drink your milk" is a familiar refrain in households across the globe. Though that statement is often directed at children, adults also may feel they need to drink more milk. But the relationship between milk and overall health is a complex one that's only been made more complicated by some long-held but potentially misleading beliefs about milk.

### Milk and bone health

Calcium, vitamin D, phosphorus, and protein have all been linked to bone health. Milk contains each of these nutrients, so it's natural for people to think milk can help to establish and maintain healthy bones. According to the International Osteoporosis Foundation, evidence strongly supports the sentiment that dairy products promote healthy bones and muscles. However, a 2001 study published in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that countries with the highest intakes of milk and calcium had the highest rates of hip fractures. Two separate

meta-analyses of prospective cohort studies, one in 2011 and the other in 2019, did not find an association between milk consumption and hip fracture risk. So what do these studies have to say about milk and bone health? That's uncertain, and acknowledging that uncertainty is important for people who are looking to milk to build strong bones. In such instances, individuals should look to additional measures aside from drinking milk, such as daily exercise and avoiding tobacco, which the Mayo



Clinic reports has been linked to weakened bones.

### Milk and long-term weight control

The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health notes that research does not support the somewhat popular notion that milk helps with long-term weight control. Though studies have found that milk and dairy could help to reduce body fat in the short-term when it was included as part of a calorie-restricted diet plan, that benefit was not evident when individuals stopped restricting their calorie intake.

### Milk and cancer

The potential relationship between milk and cancer also is complicated. A meta-analysis of more than 100 cohort studies by the World Cancer Research Fund found that higher milk intake lead to a reduced risk of colorectal cancer, though this benefit was mostly in men. However, the Chan School of

Public Health notes that other studies have linked dairy and milk intake to an increased risk of prostate cancer and early stage prostate cancer.

The relationship between milk and overall health is complex. Individuals who want to get healthy can speak with their physicians about whether or not increasing their milk intake can help them.

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## June is Dairy Month!

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To learn more about the initiative visit:  
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# S.U.M.M.E.R

## 6 TIPS TO PREVENT TEEN ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG USE THIS SUMMER

As summer vacation approaches, it can be a challenging time for both youth and parents. Adolescents have plenty of free time, while parents often struggle to balance supervision with their daily responsibilities. During these months, young people may be more exposed to the dangers of alcohol, other drugs, and risky behaviors such as reckless driving. To help prevent underage drinking and keep teenagers safe, parents can implement the following S-U-M-M-E-R strategies:

S.U.M.M.E.R

**Set rules and consequences:** Establish clear rules and fair consequences for breaking them. Data shows that when children understand the consequences of drinking, they are less likely to engage in binge drinking.

**Understand and communicate:** Engage in open conversations with your child about the dangers and consequences of alcohol use, starting as early as age nine. Consistently emphasize family rules and expectations about alcohol consumption.

**Monitor activities:** Make it difficult for teenagers to access alcohol in your home. If you have alcohol, keep track of the quantities or store it in a locked cabinet or cupboard.

**Maintain involvement:** Get to know your child's friends and their parents, coaches, and other adults in their lives. Stay connected without being intrusive, and show your child that you care about their well-being.

**Encourage summer activities:** Encourage your child to participate in structured activities such as Scouts, 4-H, sports, church groups, or other youth programs. Alternatively, they could explore job opportunities, camps, or volunteer work. Involvement in these activities can keep them occupied and focused throughout the summer.

**Reserve time for family:** Despite teenagers often seeming disinterested in spending time with their families, it is still beneficial to maintain a strong connection. Plan family meals, vacations, and outings to reinforce family bonds. Studies show that quality family time ranks high among factors contributing to happiness in adolescents.

By implementing these S-U-M-M-E-R strategies, parents can reduce the risk of underage drinking and promote a safer, more enjoyable summer for their teenagers. Establishing boundaries, fostering open communication, and encouraging positive activities can help young people make better choices and avoid the dangers associated with alcohol and other risky behaviors.

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# Cooperative Extension a key support for farmers

By KEVIN T. CONLON  
City Editor  
kconlon@cortlandstandard.com

University of New York system including the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, while others are private. Cornell's founders received 900 acres of land through the Morrill Act.

The New York State Farm Bureau was originally tasked with taking the fruits of Cornell research into the fields of farms across the state, Degni said. But in 1911, this work was transferred to the newly created Cornell Cooperative Extension. The first office was in Broome County and it expanded to include an office in each of the state's 62 counties.

"Cooperative Extension brings current research that faculty is working on, that professors are working on, into the field," Degni said.

She is leader of the six-county South Central New York Dairy and Field Crops Team, which spreads their operating costs and function more efficiently. She is also field crops specialist for the Cortland County office.

The county agency produces a newsletter, podcasts and webinars, conducts meetings and hosts conferences to bring information to farmers. That includes the latest technology, which is demonstrated and shared by those farmers who are putting it into practice, Degni said.

Farmers like Carlton and Andrea Dawson of Hights Gulf Road in Homer, who have a long history in farming and they have been supported by several Cooperative Extension programs over the decades.

Carlton Dawson sold his dairy farm in the 1990s but he has continued to be involved in agriculture since, raising heifers for another farmer and growing hay and corn for feed, his wife said recently.

"Janice (Degni) herself comes and takes soil samples every year for the land we are going to use for crops or are using for crops."

Andrea Dawson said. "The results help determine how to treat the soil where corn and hay are grown for feed."

The Carltons have also worked with staff members from other divisions of Cooperative Extension, including dairy specialist Betsy Hicks. In addition to dairy and crop experts, Cooperative Extension help in other areas: Youth development, nutrition and human services like personal finances.

The Carltons' five children participated in several of those programs. They include 4-H programs such as public speaking and leadership skills. They also they also showed dairy cattle at the annual Cortland County Junior Fair. A young grandson plans to show a heifer at the fair in July and sell a pig and some broiler chickens at an auction.

Soil health has become increasingly emphasized in agriculture in recent years, Degni said.

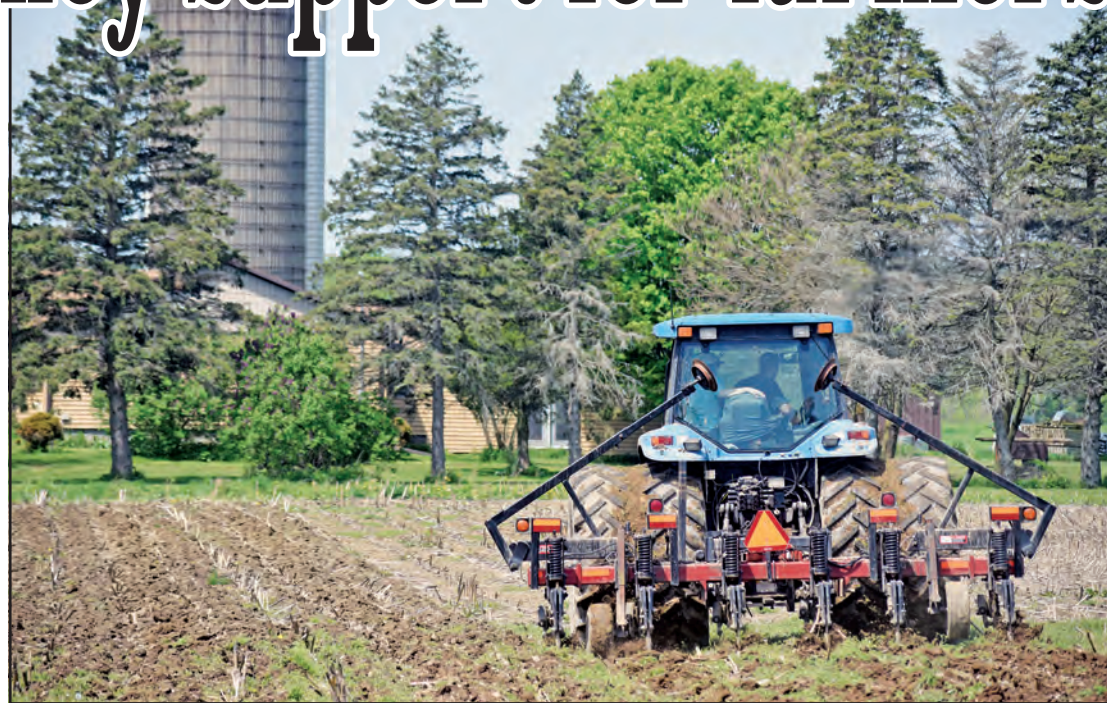
"Soil health is all the rage," she said. "It helps farmers recover from severe weather events."

Soil is fortified with additional organic matter to make it more resistant to droughts and rain storms. Pesticide management is increasingly important, said Degni, who works with farmers to obtain their licenses for applying pesticides in ways that ease the effect on the environment.

In many states, organizations like Cooperative Extension are operated by the land grant colleges. In New York state, they are affiliated with county governments. The Cortland County Cooperative Extension office is located in the County Office Building on Central Avenue in Cortland.

Degni and the other cooperative extension staff are out in the farming community providing support.

"If we don't call her, she calls us," Andrea Carleton said. "We have her on speed dial. She is always an advocate for the farmer."



Todd R. McAdam/Managing Editor

Stephen and Heather Evanick work a field on Holler Road in Virgil. They say Cornell Cooperative Extension has helped them monitor both soil quality and pests to make growing feed for their 200 cows more efficient.

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# Keeping cows cool

## Overheated cows give less milk; technology is helping farmers cope

By MARGARET MELLOTT  
Staff Reporter  
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Comfortable cows are happy cows, and happy cows better produce milk. But, as temperatures continue to rise, farmers look to mitigate heat stress.

"Milk production drops because they stand too much; they can get rid of their heat better when they're standing up, so they're not laying down," dairy farmer Paul Fouts said Wednesday. "It also affects reproduction — they're not going to get pregnant as easy and they need to do that, they have to have a calf for the next lactation to start."

A number of ways are either available to farmers — or soon

will be — to help mitigate the heat. Some are as simple as installing fans, but others involve feed, and even breeding. The challenge isn't going away.

The average high temperature between 1990 and 2020 was 76.4 degrees for Central New York, the National Weather Service reports. However, temperatures have been steadily increasing for decades, reports the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Cows are most comfortable when between 41 and 77 degrees, reports U.S. Department of Agriculture. Though some cows can experience heat stress at temperatures as low as 65 degrees.

"Also when the cows are pregnant, and they get overheated,

that affects the calf inside them," said Fouts, owner of Fouts Farm in Cortlandville. "If the mother is under heat stress, that calf will not do as well, ever, throughout her lifetime and we're told it even affects the grandchild."

Some local farmers, like Fouts, use fans to prevent heat stress.

"We have 15 variable speed fans that we have running," said Brendan Brown, owner of Trinity Valley Dairy of Homer. "They're all individually thermostat controlled. So there's a warm part of the barn, let's say it's a little bit warmer because the cows have all gone there, the fans will start speeding up."

At Cornell University, Joseph McFadden, associate professor of dairy cattle biology, is researching nutrition-based solutions for heat mitigation.

"If we can understand the nutrient requirements that a cow has during a heat-stress event, we could revolutionize the dairy cattle industry by ensuring she's getting what she needs to maintain optimum health and performance," McFadden said in a 2022 news release by the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, which funded McFadden's research.

The study found two main reasons why milk production drops in heat stressed cows: eating less



Margaret Mellott/Staff Reporter

Keeping cows cool and comfortable is crucial to dairy farms, like Trinity Valley Dairy. The farm uses fans to keep temperatures down, but other options include adjusting the animals' feed or even breeding more heat-tolerant cows.

and gut permeability, a condition caused by bacteria leaking through weakened parts of the intestinal wall. It can occur in as little as three days.

However, McFadden's research found that milk production can be partially restored by feeding cows organic acids and pure botanicals, which helps to strengthen the weakened parts of the intestinal wall.

This problem isn't isolated to

Central New York — researchers across the country are looking to find new tactics to help cows keep cool. At the University of Florida, researchers found a mutation, called the slick gene, that produces cows with short coats.

Cows with the mutation are able to keep their body temperature about 1 degree cooler, which keeps milk production and fertility rates from dropping, reports a 2014 study published by the

Journal of Dairy Science.

"I can always remember periods of being hot and humid, and then the cows suffering more than we do," Fouts said. "We've gotten a lot better at keeping them cool. When I was a kid, the barns were not as open, they weren't as tall and didn't have as many fans. So when I was a kid, I remember seeing cows pant; when they get to that point, that is really bad. We don't have that anymore."

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## Advancements in livestock technology

Consumer demand drives changes in industry, and the agricultural sector is no exception. Consumer demands for improved animal welfare have led to changes in the livestock sector, and various technologies have been developed and are in development to help this particular segment of the agricultural industry thrive.

According to the Animal AgTech Innovation Summit, various startups have developed technologies that can make the livestock industry more sustainable and efficient.

### Treatment

The Israeli firm Armenta has developed a non-antibiotic treatment for bovine mastitis that uti-

lizes acoustic pulse technology. The treatment has a 70 percent cure rate.

Another firm working to treat livestock is the United States-based General Probiotics. Animal AgTech reports that General Probiotics develops cellbots and antimicrobial probiotics that eliminate harmful pathogens in livestock. That can reduce dependency on antibiotics and make food production safer.

### Welfare

Faromatics, a firm based in Spain, has combined robotics, artificial intelligence and big data to improve animal welfare and farm productivity. One Faromatics product utilizes a robot suspended from a ceiling to monitor certain variables, including equipment function and health and welfare, that affect broiler chickens.

The American firm Swinotech utilizes voice recognition and computer vision technology in its SmartGuard product to prevent piglet deaths from crushing

and starvation. The product also makes it possible to track and facilitate obstetrical assistance.

### Operations

Based in Uganda, Jaguza Tech has developed a livestock management system that utilizes sensors, data science and machine learning to improve the efficiency, productivity and sustainability of modern farm operations. Farmers can utilize Jaguza to perform a host of functions, including monitoring their animals' health and identifying their livestock.

The Netherlands-based H2Oalert is a water control management system that checks the quality and quantity of cattle drinking water in real time. The management system also checks for pollution and malfunctions in the water supply.

Livestock technology continues to advance, and firms across the globe are developing new products and platforms to help livestock farmers make their operations more efficient, sustainable and productive.



## Health, farm experts say no sign of bird flu in New York

By BENJAMIN JOE  
Lockport Union-Sun & Journal

While an outbreak outbreak of bird flu in the nation's dairy cows has spread to more than 40 herds in nine states, local officials say there's no need for concern in New York.

Justin Rogers, executive director of Cornell Cooperative Extension in Niagara County, said in mid-May there have not been any cases of bird flu in Niagara County or New York.

Niagara County Public Health

Director Daniel Stapleton had said as much in a phone interview.

"There is nothing to do because it is not here," he said.

As of May 13, at least 42 herds in nine states are known to have cows infected with the virus known as type A H5N1, federal officials said.

The virus has been found in high levels in the raw milk of infected cows. Viral remnants have been found in samples of milk sold in grocery stores, but the FDA said those products are safe to consume because pasteurization has been confirmed to kill the virus.

It's not yet known whether live virus can be transmitted to people who consume milk that hasn't been heat-treated.

Stapleton said if something were to happen, it would be communicated to the public and he and the county would defer to the state State Department of Health for marching orders. He also said that the USDA tests for bird flu across the country, including New York, and there's no sign of it in New York state.

U.S. health and agriculture officials have pledged nearly \$200

million in new spending and other efforts to help track and contain an outbreak of bird flu in the nation's dairy cows that has spread to more than 40 herds in nine states.

The new spending comes more than six weeks after the first-ever detection of an avian bird flu virus in dairy cattle — and one confirmed infection in a Texas dairy worker exposed to infected cows who developed a mild eye infection and then recovered. About 33 people have been tested and another 260 are being monitored, reports the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The new funds include \$101 million to continue work to prevent, test, track and treat animals and humans potentially affected by the virus known as Type A H5N1, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said. They include about \$98 million to provide up to \$28,000 each to help individual farms test cattle and bolster biosecurity efforts to halt the spread of the virus, according to the Agriculture Department.

In addition, dairy farmers will be compensated for the loss of milk production from infected

cattle, whose supply drops dramatically when they become sick, officials said. Dairy farmers and farm workers would be paid to participate in a workplace study conducted by the USDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Rogers, of Niagara's Cornell Cooperative Extension, said that while the disease could be transmitted to dairy cows, there is no basis for fear of dairy in Niagara County.

"People should feel safe at this point. We want to encourage people to continue to enjoy dairy products. I made my daughter a milkshake this morning — a smoothie for breakfast," he said. "So (I believe) all is well with what our producers are putting out there. Don't skip the ice cream because you're afraid of avian flu."

That also goes for people who feed the birds.

"It's not going to impact the avian flu situation, one way or the other," Rogers said. "That virus can be carried like any flu virus and feeding (wild birds) will not make a difference."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.



# Lansing dairy innovates as it keeps to customs

By JACK LAKOWSKY  
Staff Reporter  
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Jack Lakowsky/Staff Reporter

**Lansing dairy farmer Jake Palladino, who owns Walnut Ridge Dairy, demonstrates the milking machines at his farm with cows atop a circular platform. Walnut Ridge has a herd of almost 2,000, grown from a herd of 14 in the 1950s.**

The USDA reports that since 2003, the U.S. has lost more than half of its licensed dairy operations, now 30,650 farms.

The drop in Cortland and Tompkins isn't that severe — down 22% in that time to 884 farms from 1,132.

But dairy productivity has risen steadily in the last 10 years, with New York's production rising 21% to a worth of more than \$15 billion despite losing nearly 5,000 farms.

Fewer people plus more output means more automation, Palladino said.

"We're at a point where a lot less of us are doing this, so both economically and because we need to feed the population, we have to innovate and be more efficient," Jake Palladino said, cattle lowing in the background.

Walnut Ridge has 1,900 milking cows — up from the herd of 14 it started with in the 1950s — producing 171,000 pounds of milk per day on 2,400 acres of land. That's 7.2 millions gallons of milk per year, Palladino said.

Automation has become prevalent, and necessary, in farming, Palladino said.

Walnut Ridge uses the robotic cleaner, has four-pronged automatic milking machines and in a newly built barn several large spinning brushes almost like one might see in a car wash, just a few of the innovations farmers like Palladino have adopted.

Fresh air isn't hard to come by on a farm, but it can be in a barn. About every 10 feet in Palladino's new barn large fans spin, cooling and refreshing the air. Opening the barn's large garage-style door creates a wind tunnel, another aeration method.

Palladino grew up working weekends, picking rocks out of the fields and pitchforking, much like his predecessors.

"It comes back to the way all us farm kids were raised," he said. "I decided to come back home because I couldn't imagine raising my kids any other way than how I was raised. My parents taught me a ton of good values."

That said, Palladino encour-

ages anyone with the desire to get into farming, family background or no.

Priorities, too, remain steadfast as time passes.

"Sustainability and animal care, those are really our priorities," Palladino said. "People have to trust that the people producing what's on the shelf in the grocery store are 100% invested in it for the right reasons."

## IN WITH THE NEW — AND OLD TOO

"Even though efficiency is such a focus, it doesn't mean the tradition of hard work isn't a focus still," he said. "We instill in our kids whether they come back to the farm or not."

That's part of why Walnut Ridge was named the 2017 Business of the Year at the 185th annual forum of the state Agricultural Society. It has been featured as a case study in successful farming by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County and was featured in an episode of "This American Dairy Farmer" produced by American Dairy Association North East.

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## TRADITION AND INNOVATION

Jake Palladino named for his father a piece of equipment alien to that acreage when it was first farmed in the 50s — Steve the robot.

It sanitizes cow udders, a job once performed by human hands.

"It's getting harder and harder to find people who want to do this job," he said.

# Asparagus ice cream — I ate it so you don't have to

By NICK O'MALLEY  
masslive.com  
(TNS)



Nick O'Malley/Masslive.com

**Hadley Grass ice cream, made in Hadley, Massachusetts, is flavored with asparagus. Real asparagus. It's actually pretty good.**

Asparagus ice cream sounds like a gimmick. It is not. Western Mass. does not mess around with its "Hadley Grass."

Yes, it's green and has bits of real asparagus in it. But there's a reason Flavors of Cook Farm has been making "Hadley Grass" for 20 years. It's actually a pretty well-thought-out and tasty ice cream flavor.

OK, so what the heck is going on here? Why does this exist? Some explanations are in order.

First off: "Hadley Grass" is a nickname for asparagus that stems from the town of Hadley's reputation as the "Asparagus capital of the world."

You won't hear the phrase much outside of the Pioneer Valley. But asparagus remains a part of the fabric around Hadley, which hosts an annual asparagus festival.

Why asparagus ice cream? Debby Cook, who manages the ice cream shop at Flavors, says the ice cream shop at the Hadley-based dairy farm has been making ice cream with asparagus for about 20 years.

It was her mother-in-law, Beth Cook, who originally came up with the idea. It was immediately a hit and they've been making it ever since.

The seasonal flavor (fittingly dubbed "Hadley Grass") is made with fresh spears from nearby Boisvert Farm in Hadley. The asparagus is cooked (typically boiled) and added right into the machine as the ice cream churns. They also add almonds and a secret blend of flavoring that complements the asparagus flavor. Cook says they do not add anything to change the color. The shade you see is from the asparagus.

Sure, it sounds like an ice cream machine disaster you

might see on "Chopped." But the combination of flavors really works.

What does it taste like?

At first glance, this ice cream looks innocent. Boasting a pale yellow-green shade, it signals more lemon-lime than anything. But if you look closely, you can see flecks and strands of the locally grown spears dotting the scoop.

You do taste the asparagus, which makes sense. They add 10 pounds of cooked asparagus to a batch, which makes four tubs of ice cream.

You you take a bite (or, more likely, a tentative lick) you actually get more of a mellow, nutty savory-sweet flavor at first, with the glow of the almonds and cream coming through.

It's not until a moment later that the brighter notes of the asparagus, which lean in a savory direction.

It's a functional sweetness, similar to using green tea in desserts. It's less sweet than other flavors. But that's part of the reason why it works.

The asparagus doesn't add much of a vegetal taste, it leans

more savory and earthy in a way that complements the mellow sweetness of the other elements.

It's more nutty and buttery than purely sweet. It's made in clever way. It opens up with the mellow sweetness of cream and almond, then you get the savory glow of the asparagus coming through.

The sweetness works better than you may imagine. Think of it like having sweet-roasted asparagus with a creamy sauce.

You do get bits of asparagus in there. But the texture is part of the experience. The spears are broken up while the ice cream is churned. However, you do get some occasional fibrous strands that survive. They're no more obtrusive than a chocolate chip, though.

So is it any good?

I give this a firm "yes." I'd definitely get this flavor again. In fact, I might actually experiment with it.

In this go-around, I went with a simple sugar cone. However, Cook says that customers sometimes get Hadley Grass alongside a scoop of ginger or topped with caramel sauce.

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County, to hear what his constituents want in the bill.

"I've taken that feedback and have been working hard to craft a Farm Bill that delivers increased benefits for farmers and working families," he said. "Our committee is excited to unveil

this bill very soon."

Molinaro has carried a number of bills related to agriculture policy in this session of Congress, including the Dairy Farm Resiliency Act which make the changes to the Dairy Margin Coverage program called for in

this year's Farm Bill — allowing participants to update their production numbers so their participation in the program better reflects their actual production if it has grown or shrunk since 2014, when the current program's data is based on.




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