



Agriculture:

*Jackie McCarville, Regional Dairy Educator
Jordyn Sattler, Regional Crops & Soil Educator
Kimberly Kester, Regional Livestock Educator*



The Extension Agriculture Institute is your connection to the latest University of Wisconsin-Madison research. Our five program areas; Agriculture Water Quality, Crops and Soils, Dairy and Livestock, Farm Management, and Horticulture, are here to educate and respond to the needs of the agriculture community while providing resources that promote economic and environmental sustainability in Wisconsin. We apply research to challenges facing communities and businesses.

Dairy News

An article has been published specifically for dairy farm owners and employees, providing essential information about dry matter and various methods to measure it on the farm. The aim is to help them understand the significance of dry matter in enabling accurate feed comparisons and in formulating balanced diets. (Jackie)

A series of five dairy cattle feeder bilingual face-to-face meetings were developed beginning in the fall of 2024. The last meeting had to be cancelled due to a winter storm. Instead of cancelling the event, zoom and zoom interpretation services were put in place along with on line forms such as google forms so that attendees could still participate in the program despite the need to cancel the face-to-face event. Twenty-one attendees representing 7 farms and a feed mill were able to participate in the event. The event was recorded and will be captioned to increase the audience over the upcoming months. They learned they were part of a team that is seeking to improve accuracy, precision, safety and timeliness and the why of what they did was important. (Jackie)

A collaborative study with Colorado State University explored the practices and challenges in transporting pre-weaned dairy and beef x dairy calves from farms to haulers and calf raisers. The findings aim to support better welfare practices, farm viability, and food safety. Over 50 dairy industry contacts were engaged as potential survey participants. (Jackie)

95 youth participated in local fair-required quality assurance programs, which I offered through two in-person sessions per county. These programs teach animal care, food safety, and life skills—especially important as more youth exhibit animals owned by farmers. Participants gain a stronger understanding of animal production and are better prepared to answer fairgoers’ questions about how animals are raised. (Jackie)

Dairy Feeder School

We're organizing a bilingual, in-person event where participants can learn and strengthen their understanding of feed safety, feed management, transition cow health, and feeding economics. This initiative aims to improve animal health and milk production efficiency by optimizing the use of resources—such as feed, time, and labor—ultimately boosting farm profitability and reducing waste. (Jackie)



Outreach and Education

Planning for a multi-state conference/workshop for beef producers where participants learn about land stewardship to enhance climate resiliency, livestock well-being practices, and stockmanship skills to increase market access and improve profitability. (Kim)

A livestock quality assurance training for 13 youth exhibitors in Lafayette County, where they learned about the quality care of animals through animal well-being, food safety, and life skills to help individuals understand their role in food animal production to improve business viability and environmental sustainability. (Kim)

Beef Management

Crossbreeding is management practice that, when done right, can improve profitability for beef cow calf operations through improved cow longevity, increased weaning weights animal health. It is often underutilized, as it is an old management practice that is overlooked, or some smaller producers believe it is too complicated. An article was written explaining how crossbreeding was beneficial for beef producers profitability and examples of effective crossbreeding programs for smaller beef operations. (Kim)

Publications

An article for the Midwest Forage Association's "Forage Focus" newsletter about how swath/windrow grazing can be incorporated into beef production systems as a method of extending the grazing season and minimizing inputs. (Kim)

A regular column that rotates between Livestock Educator, Dairy Educator, and Crops & Soils Educator in the Wisconsin Amish Shopper newspaper, which reaches Amish and Mennonite families in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota. Late April: "Biosecurity Practices Keep Livestock Healthy" - Methods to limit transmission of infectious agents such as highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) on-farm, and signs/symptoms of infected cattle and poultry. (Kim)

Pollinators

An in-person presentation for the local chapter of the Daughter's of the American Revolution to learn about how to support pollinators when selecting plants for their gardens in order to increase native pollinator populations. (Kim)

Emergency Training

A training session was held for Lafayette County Fire Department Chiefs focused on responding to livestock trailer accidents. The session covered key considerations and essential protocols for safely handling incidents involving animals. A total of 32 firefighters and police officers attended, learning strategies to protect both human and animal lives during these emergencies. (Kim and Jackie)





Crop Presentations

Crop scouts are an important piece of the crop management puzzle, and many of the crop scouts employed by farms, ag cooperatives and consultants need foundational skills to improve their work in the field. Typically, they require training at a time their employers and mentors are busy with in season crop production work. After completing an internal training program for Extension Crops educators, we determine we could offer the program to an external audience. We are currently planning and will be executing a series of "Lunch & Learn" webinars that will be offered live and recorded. Each webinar will address a different basic skill related to crop scouting. After the webinar series is complete, a series of in person, in field training sessions will be hosted at the Arlington, Lancaster and Marshfield Research stations. (Jordyn)

Some tobacco producers in the region are required to be Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certified as part of their buyer's contract. To help tobacco producers in the region obtain certification, I hosted a webinar training session featuring specialists from the University of Kentucky. As a result, producers learned about tobacco variety trials, agronomic recommendations, best management practices, current research taking place to improve crop management, and how to properly manage employees. This will allow them to grow their crop more efficiently, economically, and safely for all farm workers. (Jordyn)

Sheep and Goat Presentations

An in-person workshop for sheep and goat producers where information was presented, and a fecal egg count was demonstrated and taught to participants. Participants learned about the parasite lifecycle, fecal egg counts, and additional integrated management strategies to decrease production and economic losses to parasite infections. Participants also learned how to collect, prepare, and analyze fecal samples to determine parasite infection and how to use this information to select animals and management strategies to improve animal health and increase production and profitability. (Kim)

Pest Trapping

Southern Wisconsin often faces early pest pressure from migratory insects but has lacked sufficient monitoring, leading to delayed detection and potential crop losses. To address this, a new insect trapping site with pheromone traps has been established in the Southwest region to monitor pests like Black Cutworm and True Armyworm early in the season, and Western Bean Cutworm and Fall Armyworm later on. This local data will help producers respond proactively, make timely management decisions, and encourage others to join the trapping network, expanding its effectiveness and reach. (Jordyn)

Alfalfa Seeding Systems

Some alfalfa producers avoid using companion crops due to concerns about stress on young alfalfa and long-term stand health, while others use oats to boost first-year yield but still leave soil exposed in winter. Winter rye could offer better erosion protection and increased yield, but concerns remain about its allelopathic effects. To assess its viability, a trial was developed comparing alfalfa seeded with rye (terminated at different times), oats, and no companion crop. The study aims to evaluate impacts on forage yield, soil erosion, weed pressure, and potential plant stress from competition or allelopathy.



*Human Development & Relationships:
Bob Wiegel, Human Development & Relationship Educator*



This Human Development & Relationships Educator will provide financial education to individuals and families, helping to improve financial capabilities and stability through evidence-based resources and educational programs. In addition, they will promote healthy child and family development through research-based resources and educational programs for parents, caregivers, and professionals working in early childcare and the education workforce.

Lafayette and Green County Community Research

I continue to meet with county leaders in both Green and Lafayette Counties to identify need and familiarize county leaders with the programming that I can offer through the Extension. I will be offering Planning Ahead in both Counties starting in June and Money as you Grow in Lafayette County in April and Green County in May. I participated in a Swifile (Southwest Wisconsin Initiative for Financial Education) event where high school students participated in a real-life scenario to help them better understand budgeting and spending skills. I attended formal and informal meetings in both Green and Lafayette Counties. I continue to make strong connections with leaders and potential participants in both counties. Both Green and Lafayette Counties have identified housing and financial struggles for county residents.

Money Smart

A newsletter series (Money Smart in Head Start) for parents of young children where they learn skills such as using credit wisely, keeping their money safe, savings strategies, organizing their financial records, and making choices about health insurance. Through this program parents can create more financial stability for their families.

Planning AHEAD Program

A 7-session course that helps adults of all ages to make end-of-life financial, healthcare, and final wishes decisions in order to reduce the stress experienced by survivors and to ensure that their wishes are honored. The Planning AHEAD curriculum covers seven topics: Getting Started, Handling Financial Changes, Advance Directives, Estate Planning, Choices in End-of-Life Care, Final Wishes, and Understanding Grief. The course is typically delivered in one-hour sessions once a week for seven weeks.



FoodWise:

Maggie Milcarek, FoodWise Nutrition Coordinator
Julia Harman, FoodWise Nutrition Educator



The Extension Institute for Health & Well-Being works to catalyze positive change in Wisconsin communities to promote health and well-being. Our research-based programs are focused on food and nutrition security, chronic disease prevention, mental health promotion, substance use prevention, and access to health care. Rooted in both urban and rural communities, we're working together to help solve the state's most pressing well-being needs and to ensure that all Wisconsinites have the opportunity to live stronger, healthier lives.

Shullsburg Elementary Nutrition Education

A five-week nutrition education series at Shullsburg Elementary School for second, third, and fourth graders will focus on teaching the importance of healthy eating and physical activity. Students will explore the five food groups, the benefits of eating a variety of foods, and strategies for making healthy choices. They will also be encouraged to try new foods, with opportunities to sample them together. To reinforce these lessons at home, weekly educational handouts will be provided to parents and caregivers. The program aims to foster healthy eating habits and promote active lifestyles both at school and at home.

Food Garden Grants

FoodWise Coordinator is purchasing initial seed starting materials, materials for raised garden beds, and educational materials for the five food gardens in the four-county area. Coordinator and Educator are working with garden partners to plan and develop garden education opportunities for spring and summer. Gardens include: Family Promise (Green County), Livingston Community Improvement Corporation Food Pantry Garden (Iowa/Grant), Lafayette County Housing Authority Riverview Apartments in Blanchardville (Lafayette), Meridian Housing Group Dodgeville Apartments in Dodgeville (Iowa), and Juda Elementary School in Juda (Green). The purpose of the gardens are to increase access to and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and provide educational opportunities at the garden site.

Meadows Housing Outreach

FoodWise held an outreach event at The Meadows Housing in Darlington property in partnership with SWCAP and the GWAAR Community Health Worker. The purpose of the event was to meet with Meadows residents, present on program offerings, and gauge community interest in holding a variety of classes in English and Spanish at the property.

Tai Chi

A twice-weekly, 8-week Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention class, including a weekly nutrition lesson. Eight participants are registered for the series held at Grace Lutheran Church and promoted to Lafayette County Housing Authority residents, which serves older adults and adults with disabilities who are low-income in Darlington. The Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention Program is recognized by the CDC as an evidence-based program for improving health and wellness, as well as proven effective for fall prevention.





Positive Youth Development:

Hailee Kammerud, 4-H Youth Development Educator



The Extension Institute of Positive Youth Development prepares the youth of today to become the effective, empathetic adults of tomorrow. Our research-based youth enrichment programs like teens in governance build youth and adult capacity and partnerships that help both sides grow. 4-H clubs, camps and afterschool programs give youth people the hands-on experiences they need to develop an understanding of themselves and the world.

Community Collaborations

It was a colorful day full of laughter, creativity, and connection as 4-H partnered with McCoy Public Library to host a special dot painting activity for local kids. The event brought together 20 young artists who each got the chance to explore their creativity in a fun, relaxed environment. Held at McCoy Public Library, the workshop introduced children to the vibrant world of dot painting—a technique that uses simple tools like cotton swabs to create beautiful patterns with dots. Under the guidance of the 4-H educator and library staff, the kids experimented with color, pattern, and design, proudly producing their own unique masterpieces to take home.

This collaboration is part of an ongoing effort between 4-H and McCoy Public Library to provide enriching, hands-on learning experiences for kids in the community. It’s more than just arts and crafts—events like these help children build confidence, develop fine motor skills, and express themselves in creative ways.

With smiles all around and plenty of paint-covered fingers, the day was a glowing success—and just one more example of how powerful partnerships like this can make a big difference in small communities.

******Coming up soon, 4-H is teaming up with Johnson Public Library for a magical community event focused on creating fairy gardens! Kids and families are invited to join the fun as they design their own miniature garden scenes using plants, pebbles, tiny figurines, and plenty of imagination. This hands-on activity encourages creativity, teamwork, and a love for nature—perfect for all ages. Don't miss this enchanting collaboration between 4-H and Johnson Public Library!

*******Get ready for a sweet time! 4-H is partnering with Johnson Public Library for a fun-filled cookie decorating event that’s perfect for kids and families. Participants will get hands-on with frosting, sprinkles, and more as they decorate delicious cookies to take home—or enjoy on the spot! This tasty collaboration is a great way to get creative, connect with the community, and celebrate the season together.

4-H Ambassadors:

The 4-H Ambassadors have been busy planning a fun-filled morning for local youth, and their hard work is about to pay off! Their upcoming summer program, *Dive into 4-H*, is set for Saturday, May 31, from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m.—and it's open to all kids in kindergarten through 4th grade.

This exciting event promises a wave of hands-on fun, including tie-dying, ocean-themed crafts, tasty snacks, and even sea animal trivia! Kids will also get the chance to learn the 4-H pledge and discover what 4-H is all about in a playful, welcoming environment.

“Dive into 4-H” is the perfect opportunity for younger youth to explore creativity, make new friends, and get a taste of the 4-H spirit. Whether they’re swirling colors into a one-of-a-kind tie-dye shirt or guessing the name of a sea creature, every activity is designed to spark curiosity and smiles.

The 4-H Ambassadors—local teens who serve as youth leaders—have poured their energy and ideas into planning this event, and they can’t wait to welcome the next wave of future 4-H’ers.

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4-H & Americorps:

Summer is just around the corner, and Wisconsin 4-H is thrilled to welcome two dedicated AmeriCorps members who will be serving our communities all season long! With their passion, creativity, and love for helping youth thrive, these members will be leading and supporting a wide variety of programs and partnerships aimed at learning, connection, and summer fun.

From digging into community garden projects to sparking imaginations through library collaborations, their summer schedule is packed with opportunities for youth to grow, explore, and engage. Whether it's decorating cookies at a library, planting veggies, or diving into a good book, every activity is designed to build skills and smiles.

This summer's goals also include filling the Floral Hall with amazing youth exhibits at the fair, supporting local homeschool groups with special programs, and hosting exciting Cloverbud meetings for our youngest 4-H'ers. And let's not forget the always-popular 4-H Exploration Day—a special event where youth get a taste of all the fun and learning 4-H has to offer!

With the support of AmeriCorps and the strong spirit of Wisconsin 4-H, Summer 2025 is shaping up to be full of creativity, curiosity, and community connection. Stay tuned for event dates, ways to join in, and all the hands-on fun coming your way!

State 4-H Travel Experiences: Blasting off to New Adventure

One of our very own 4-H educators has been preparing for an out-of-this-world experience! Returning this year, I have served as one of three lead staff members planning travel to Huntsville, Alabama, alongside 83 youth and 8 adult chaperones from across Wisconsin for an unforgettable journey to Space Camp.

This exciting opportunity is all about inspiring young minds through hands-on STEM learning, teamwork, and discovery. From astronaut training simulations to learning about life in space, youth will explore science and space exploration like never before.

The goal? To open doors, spark curiosity, and show kids from all over Wisconsin just how big—and exciting—their futures can be.

With our 4-H educator helping lead the charge, we know this group is set for an incredible mission. Wisconsin 4-H is proud to support life-changing experiences like these that launch youth toward their full potential!

Summer Camp: Camp Countdown Begins!

Summer camp season is almost here, and excitement is building as Grant and Lafayette County 4-H educators are hard at work preparing a fantastic team of camp counselors! These teen leaders are currently in training to help lead the 2025 4-H Summer Camp, taking place June 29–July 2 at beautiful Upham Woods in Wisconsin Dells.

Designed for 4-H youth in 3rd through 7th grade, camp promises classic outdoor adventures—think hiking, swimming, campfires, and canoeing—along with team-building, creativity, and plenty of fun. The trained counselors will help create a safe, welcoming, and unforgettable experience for every camper.

Thanks to the dedication of these educators and counselors, it's shaping up to be a summer to remember at Upham Woods!