

New Jersey Ruminant Report



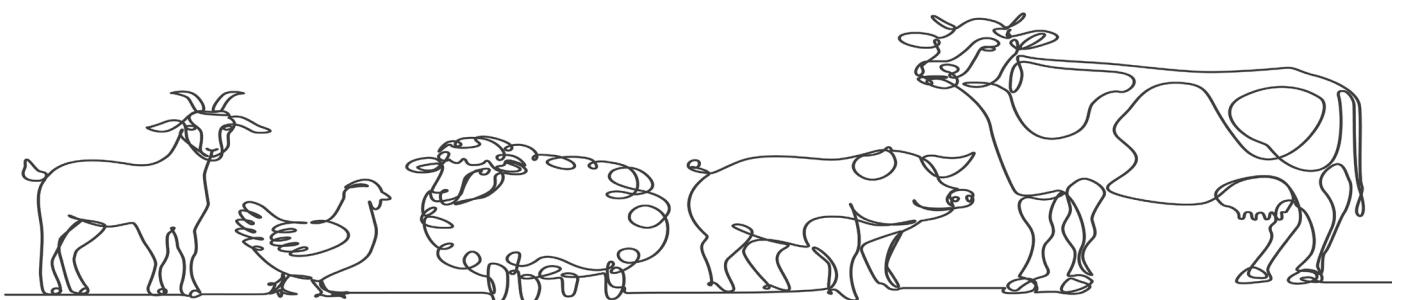
New Program Alert: Backyard Farming Basics

By: Tess Stahl, Ph.D.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension recently launched Backyard Farming Basics, a new educational program developed by Dr. Hassan Warriach (Warren County Agricultural and Natural Resources Agent) and me, Dr. Tess Stahl (New Jersey Livestock and Dairy Extension Specialist). The program was created to meet the growing demand for practical livestock education among beginning farmers, backyard animal owners, homesteaders, and small-scale livestock producers throughout New Jersey.

The inaugural session, Healthy Birds, Safe Herds, focused on disease prevention and biosecurity ahead of county fair season. Participants learned about common disease found at the state diagnostic laboratory in both poultry and cattle, disease transmission, best practices for on-farm biosecurity, and important considerations when preparing animals for exhibition (both state rules and regulations, as well as fairground biosecurity considerations).

Through future sessions, Backyard Farming Basics will provide research-based information and hands-on learning opportunities to help participants develop the knowledge and skills needed to better understand animal health, productivity, husbandry, and management. We look forward to continuing to support New Jersey livestock owners through this new program and hope you will join us at future meetings.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

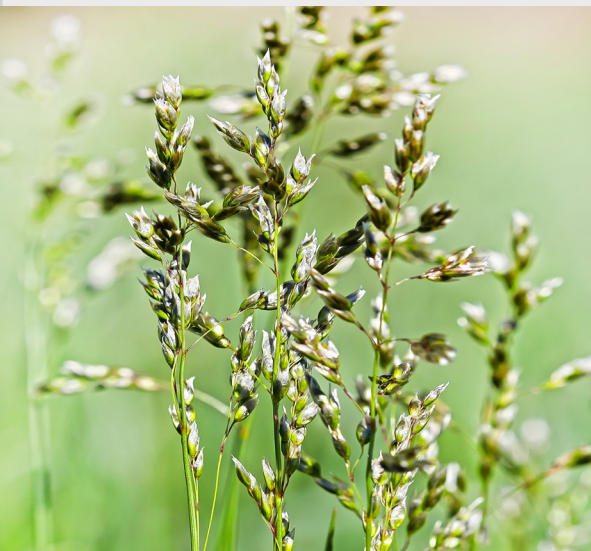
New Program Alert
Tess Stahl, Ph.D. P1

Managing the Summer Slump
in New Jersey Pastures
*Ramandeep Kumar Sharma,
Ph.D.* P2

Fair Season Biosecurity:
Protecting Your Animals
at Every Stage
Tess Stahl, Ph.D. P4

New World Screwworm
Presence in U.S. Confirmed:
Low Risk to NJ
*Amar Patil,
DVM, MVSc,
Ph.D., Dipl. ACVM, Director of
the Division of Animal Health
and Tess Stahl, Ph.D.* P6

Unless listed, photos used were purchased
licenses via Adobe stock images



Sharma Works Cited:

Bamka, W. J., & Justin, J. R. (2003). Establishing and managing horse pastures (Fact Sheet No. FS368). Rutgers Cooperative Extension, New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station.

Duiker, S. W., Brackenrich, J., Dupstadt, L., & Wang, G. (2025, September 9). Grazing during the summer slump. Penn State Extension.

University of Vermont Extension Northwest Crops and Soils Program. (2021, December). Guide to using annual forages in the Northeast. University of Vermont Extension.

Weinert-Nelson, J., & Williams, C. (2021). Crabgrass integration in New Jersey horse pastures (Fact Sheet FS1339). Rutgers Cooperative Extension, New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station



Managing the Summer Slump in New Jersey Pastures

By: Ramandeep Kumar Sharma, Ph.D.

What is Summer Slump and Why Does it Occur?

New Jersey is geographically located in a transition zone where the climate is conducive for both the cool and warm-season grasses. However, many New Jersey pastures are dominated by cool-season grass. These cool-season grasses include Orchardgrass, Tall Fescue, Perennial Ryegrass, Timothy, Reed Canarygrass, and Kentucky Bluegrass, which grow prolifically during the cooler temperatures (ideally 60-80°F) of spring and fall months. During these times of the year with warmer days, cooler nights, and longer daylight hours, these cool season pastures attain their highest growth to meet the grazing demands for the most digestible nutrients. Therefore, animal densities and stocking rates are at their peak during this time of highest pasture growth. However, the production of pastures reaches its lowest point in summer, typically when temperatures consistently go above 80°F and precipitation becomes less consistent as the pasture tends to grow slower. This phenomenon of slower growth in pasture is commonly known as the summer slump. The various reasons for it to occur include heat stress, drought/moisture stress, reduced root growth, reduced nutrient use efficiency, and increased disease pressure in humid summers.

What Management Strategies Should be Followed to Reduce Summer Slump?

Following proactive management practices, as mentioned below, can substantially reduce the severity of summer slump, yet it's difficult to fully eliminate it.

Avoid Overgrazing:

Cool-season grasses already have reduced photosynthetic activity in summer due to hot weather. Overgrazing further compels them to survive below their minimum energy threshold, slowing down their recovery rate during high heat conditions. Therefore, one of the most effective ways to maintain pasture productivity is to leave adequate residual forage after grazing. Maintaining a residual height (avoid scalping) of 3 to 4 inches for most cool-season grasses is considered a best grazing practice. These 3-4 inches of stem left behind serve as a savings account for these grasses to store their carbohydrates (as energy sources) and proteins (as nitrogen sources) in preparation for harsh times. Adequately left leaf area serves as solar panels to support photosynthesis and regrowth for the next grazing cycle.

Practice Rotational Grazing:

Rotational grazing gives forage plants additional time to recover between grazing cycles, which fosters deeper root development compared to continuous grazing, maintains uniformity in forage utilization across paddocks, and decreases selective overgrazing of high-quality patches. It is suggested to move livestock out of paddocks after grazing up to 3-4 inches in height and then bring them back when plants regrow to 6-8-inch height. Rotation speed should be adjusted based on regrowth rate, not on fixed time intervals or days. It should be avoided to re-graze before the full recovery of the canopy. Rest periods are advised to increase during mid-summer days as compared to the spring.

Soil Fertility Considerations:

Effective fertility management can directly impact plant stress tolerance during summer. Nitrogen, potassium, and sulfur are the key nutrients to keep in mind while planning a fertility program for cool-season grasses. Nitrogen is a driver of plant growth. Nitrogen is suggested to be applied in split applications (instead of applying all at once) to match the plant demand, but high doses (if needed) of nitrogen should be avoided in summer, as they can cause plant burns and increase fertilizer loss. Ensuring adequate potassium helps plants to stay resistant against heat, water, and other disease-related stresses. Sulfur helps in protein synthesis, enhances nitrogen use efficiency, and promotes fast recovery after stress. Hence, maintaining adequate sulfur levels, especially in low organic matter and sandy soil, can be highly helpful for pastures to stay healthy. Conducting routine soil testing can help in maintaining recommended soil pH levels through liming when needed.

Monitor Water Availability:

Heat stress also directly impacts livestock performance. Moisture availability varies widely by soil type, with sandy and low-organic-matter soils drying faster than finer-textured soils. Important management considerations are 1) Monitoring soil moisture conditions regularly throughout the summer, 2) Staying watchful for visible drought stress symptoms such as leaf rolling, browning, and reduced growth, and 3) Ensuring livestock always have access to clean, fresh water, especially during periods of high heat stress. Where irrigation is available, maintaining steady (not excessive) soil moisture can reduce plant stress and support continued growth. Yet, avoiding saturated conditions is equally important to maintain root oxygen availability. Practices that improve soil structure and organic matter can significantly enhance water-holding capacity and drought resilience.

Plan for Reduced Forage Production:

A key management step is recognizing that summer forage production will be lower than spring production, regardless of inputs or management. Common issues arise when stocking rates are based on spring forage availability. As temperatures increase, forage accumulation slows, and grazing pressure can rapidly exceed growth. A forage budget approach can help avoid overuse of pastures. Strategies include: 1) Harvesting surplus spring growth as hay or baleage, 2) Stockpiling forage for summer use, 3) Decreasing stocking density to align with low-growth periods, 4) Using supplemental feed strategically, and 5) Diversifying forage systems. Planning ahead helps protect stand persistence while maintaining livestock performance.

Incorporate Warm-Season Forages:

Crop performance of warm season perennials/annuals is least affected by hot and dry summers. Examples of these perennial/annuals include sudangrass and sorghum-sudan hybrids, sunn hemp, cowpea, teff, forage soybean, switchgrass, big bluestem, indiangrass, millets, crabgrass, and bermudagrass (site dependent). These grasses follow C4 photosynthetic pathways, for which the ideal temperature range is 85-95°F, which makes these grasses grow unstressed even in hot summers. On the other side, cool-season grass follows C3 photosynthetic pathway, reducing its ability to grow well at temperature higher than 60-75°F. Therefore, for uninterrupted forage supply in summer, it is suggested to incorporate warm-season forages in some portions of the field that can decrease the grazing pressure on perennial cool-season stands and improve overall system resilience.

Take-Home Message

Summer slump is mainly climate-induced, which cannot be eliminated, but its impact can be substantially decreased by adopting best grazing management practices, protecting leaf area, balanced fertility, moisture management, and proactive forage planning. Well-managed forages that enter summer in a healthy condition are in a better position to maintain productivity, withstand stress, and recover quickly when cooler temperatures return.

Fair Season Biosecurity: Protecting Your Animals at Every Stage

By: Tess Stahl, Ph.D.

During the first Backyard Farming Basics session, Healthy Birds, Safe Herds, I presented on disease transmission and biosecurity practices before, during, and after fairs. As fair season approaches, I thought it would be helpful to summarize that presentation here.

By implementing biosecurity practices before, during, and after livestock exhibitions, producers can help protect the health of their animals, reduce the spread of disease, and ensure a successful fair season for everyone involved!

We all know that livestock exhibitions, whether local, county, state, or regional fairs, provide valuable opportunities to showcase livestock breeds and connect with the public to promote agriculture. However, fairs can also create ideal conditions for disease transmission. Generally, fairs bring together animals of different species, breeds, ages, and management backgrounds from many locations that are sharing the same housing space at the fairgrounds. This creates opportunities for pathogens to move between herds and flocks. In addition, these animals are stressed due to being transported to the fairgrounds, staying amongst unfamiliar surroundings, and increased stranger interaction (via fairgoers coming to look at the animals). Due to this, their immune systems may be less effective at fighting infections that may arise during or after exhibition.

Before the Fair:

Effective biosecurity begins before the animals even leave your property or farm because only healthy animals should be transported to the fair. Animals showing signs of illness, such as coughing, nasal discharge, diarrhea, lethargy, or reduced feed intake, should remain at home. Before departure, ensure animals are acclimated to their fair ration and are up to date on required vaccinations. Any testing, health certificates, and other paperwork should be completed before travel, and county and state fair requirements should be reviewed to ensure proper compliance (especially if traveling to out-of-state fairs). Also, trailers, feed and water buckets, halters, grooming tools, pitchforks, wheelbarrows, and other equipment should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before travel. Finally, a tip I recently learned from a veterinarian is about not bringing the shoes/boots you wear when around your own livestock to the feed store, as you run the risk of bringing pathogens back from other farms via your footwear. This tip applies to fairs, as you should designate a pair of "fair shoes" or "fair boots" that are only worn at the fairgrounds and cleaned + disinfected before returning home.

At the Fair:

All of the things we will discuss here will generally aid in minimizing animal stress and support overall health of both animals and the people around them!

Human health should be considered at the fairgrounds, through frequent handwashing, avoiding eating or drinking in livestock areas, and limiting unnecessary contact between visitors and animals.



As for animals and equipment, the priority is to minimize opportunities for disease transmission.

Animal Management Tips:

- Avoid nose-to-nose contact between animals whenever possible.
- Keep species separated.
- House younger animals away from older animals (even if they are from the same farm).
- Keep pens clean and dry, with adequate amounts of bedding.
- Allow animals constant access to clean drinking water.
- Maintain good ventilation (fans!!) throughout the animals' time at the fairgrounds.

Equipment Management Tips:

- Refrain from sharing any equipment (feeding equipment, water buckets, grooming supplies, etc.) with anyone (including friends, family (that own their own separate animals), or fair neighbors).
- If equipment must be shared, ensure proper disinfection occurs before returning the equipment to the lender.
- Avoid manure contact from other animals from different farms, especially in feeding areas and in bedding (through wheelbarrow tires or shared pitchforks).

After the Fair:

After returning home, animals that attended the fair should be isolated from the rest of the herd or flock and quarantined for two to four weeks (the longer the better). These animals should be monitored for fever, coughing, nasal discharge, diarrhea, or reduced appetite. Livestock owners should also allow animals adequate recovery time between fairs whenever possible to reduce stress. As for the things you bring to the fairgrounds (equipment, trailers, boots, and supplies), these should be cleaned and disinfected before being used with other animals (or at other fairs). Finally, maintaining accurate animal movement and health records can be invaluable in case a disease outbreak occurs.

Works Cited:

Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. Animal Health Considerations Before, During and After the Fair. Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, <https://www.vet.cornell.edu/animal-health-diagnostic-center/programs/nyschap/modules-documents/animal-health-considerations-during-and-after-fair>. Accessed May 28, 2026.

Michigan State University Extension. Biosecurity for Livestock Exhibitors. Sept. 22, 2016. https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/biosecurity_for_livestock_exhibitors_e2841. Accessed May 28, 2026.

South Dakota State University Extension. Fair Season Biosecurity. July 30, 2025. <https://extension.sdstate.edu/fair-season-biosecurity>. Accessed May 28, 2026.

New World Screwworm Presence in U.S. Confirmed: Low Risk to NJ

By: Amar Patil, DVM, MVSc, Ph.D., Dipl, ACVM, and Tess Stahl, Ph.D.

Dr. Patil is the Director of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) Division of Animal Health

In the last edition of this newsletter, Dr. Amar Patil discussed updates on New World Screwworm. In this edition, I wanted to include an update, as the NJDA Division of Animal Health has released more information explaining the parasite since the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently confirmed identification of New World Screwworm in the country.

What is New World Screwworm?

New World screwworm (NWS) is a parasitic fly whose larvae feed on the living tissue of warm-blooded animals, including livestock, pets, wildlife, and birds. Infestations can cause severe wounds, secondary infections, and even death if left untreated. The pest was eradicated from the United States in 1966 through a USDA sterile insect program that established a protective barrier in Panama and helped keep North and Central America free of NWS for decades. However, NWS reemerged in Central America in 2023 and has continued to spread northward.



On June 3, 2026, the USDA confirmed a case of NWS in Texas after larvae were detected in an umbilical wound on a three-week-old beef calf. Laboratory testing at the National Veterinary Services Laboratories confirmed the identification. In response, federal and state animal health officials are implementing movement controls and sterile insect technique (SIT), which involves releasing sterile male flies to disrupt reproduction and help prevent further spread of the pest.

At this time, the risk of NWS introduction into New Jersey remains low, and there are no additional import requirements for livestock originating from Texas. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture continues to monitor the situation and may implement additional measures if future risk assessments warrant further action.

What to look for in your animals that may be an indication of NWS infestation:

- Maggots in wounds or other body openings, such as the nose, ears, genitalia, or navel (in newborn animals).
- Wounds that have a bloody discharge or foul odor.
- Wounds that become deeper and larger as the maggots grow and feed on living tissue.
- Animals that have recently given birth, suffered an injury, or undergone a surgical procedure (such as dehorning or branding) are most vulnerable to attracting NWS.
- An animal had a recent travel history or was rescued from Central American countries or Mexico and has any of the above signs.

Reminder:

The NJDA Division of Animal Health released information in late April regarding interstate movement of NJ-originating lactating dairy cattle.

They discussed how the USDA recently updated its guidance for interstate movement of lactating dairy cattle, eliminating the requirement for Influenza A (HPAI, H5N1) testing prior to shipment from states classified as "Unaffected" under the National Milk Testing Strategy (NMTS).

Because New Jersey is designated as an Unaffected (Stage 4) state, lactating dairy cattle originating in New Jersey no longer require pre-movement testing for interstate travel.

Producers should continue to monitor cattle for signs consistent with Influenza A infection, including reduced feed intake, decreased milk production, abnormal milk, fever, and changes in manure consistency. Suspected cases should be reported to a veterinarian and the NJDA Division of Animal Health.

Announcement:

The NJDA Division of Animal Health issued a quarantine order on June 30 to help prevent New World screwworm (NWS) from entering New Jersey.

The order prohibits the entry of animals that are infested with or suspected of being infested with NWS, as well as animals originating from quarantined premises until the premises are declared free of infestation. It also establishes additional movement requirements for susceptible animals entering or transiting through states with NWS-infested or adjacent surveillance zones, including veterinary inspection, Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (CVIs), treatment requirements for certain animals, and movement permits for livestock. Producers should review the new requirements before importing animals into New Jersey from affected areas. Refer to either the [full quarantine order](#) or a [summarized infographic](#) for more information.



Editor:

Tess Stahl, Ph.D.

Our Efforts

The Ruminant Report Newsletter provides information from a multi-discipline group of Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension Specialists and Agents representing diverse expertise in animal and forage crop production. This issue also includes the NJDA State veterinarian. The Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension Specialists and Agents through the Ruminant Report Newsletter will present current, relevant, and innovative information to you on a biannual basis.

Rutgers is an equal access/equal opportunity institution. Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to direct suggestions, comments, or complaints concerning any accessibility issues with Rutgers websites to: accessibility@rutgers.edu or complete the [Report Accessibility Barrier or Provide Feedback Form](#).

Ruminant Report

New Jersey



Photo Credit:
Rutgers Farm Instagram

Newsletter

Issue 3

Spring 2026