

EXTENSION DODGE COUNTY MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

JULY 2025

AGRICULTURE - CROPS



If it happens on a farm or in a field, the Extension Institute of Agriculture works with you to achieve better results. Our innovative dairy management programs range from genetics to farm and business management. Extension researchers work hand-in-hand with row crop, forage and fresh produce growers to provide best practices for every aspect of the growing phase. We also advise communities on using sustainable practices to create inviting spaces free from invasive species.

Educator: Will Fulwider

Launched an RFP for the Dodge County Farm to gather proposals from farmers in the county on innovative approaches of how to farm the county-owned land surrounding the airport north of Juneau. Talked with several interested farmers about potential demonstration and research trials for the site.

UW Madison has recommendations for nitrogen crediting for manure and for single species legumes like red clover following or interseeded into wheat prior to corn. However, as farmer concerns for soil health and nutrient loss during fallow periods has spread, farmers are increasingly adopting cover crop mixes as a way of reaping the benefits from grasses, legumes, brassicas, and forbs, while minimizing the disadvantages of each. There is little to no systematic, on-farm research in Wisconsin on the yield effect from these multi-species mixes.

This research seeks to understand not only how the composition of these mixes affects the nitrogen crediting to the following corn crop, but also the effect that these mixes have on the soil health metrics that farmers are planting them for. The research team collaborated with three farmers in Dodge county and three in Dane, to design the research plots and the farmers planted the first year of the research in August 2023. Cover crop and non-cover crop controls were evaluated for baseline measurements of soil health and nitrogen, while in season measurements of nitrogen provided a snapshot of the fate of the nitrogen from the cover crops. Yield collected at the end of the year from the plots will allow the research team to construct response curves to estimate the nitrogen credit derived from the cover crop mixes. Presentations at various farmer conferences and field days as well as an Extension fact sheet on the research will help the results of the research reach farmers.

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AGRICULTURE - DAIRY



The Dairy Program offers education by holding in-person meetings and live webinars, as well as developing resources such as articles, factsheets, and videos that can be found right here on this website.

Our program is made up of University Specialists and Regional Educators. Specialists perform scientific research based on dairy industry demands and develop practical resources for Wisconsin farm families. Regional Dairy Educators deliver research and resources to farms like yours and connect trusted, unbiased, university-based research to assist the dairy industry in making the livelihood of farming viable in the future.

Educator: Manuel Pena

Planning for a spreadsheet tool for dairy producers and consultants. The goal is to help producers understand the value of managing inventory and to be able to use the spreadsheet to account for loss and varying qualities of feed, and storage methods so that they can better plan and manage feed inventories. Feed is the largest expense on a dairy farm, accounting for about half of all input costs.

Older tools developed for feed inventory management focused heavily on storage in tower silos. Today many different storage systems including bunkers, piles, balage and dry hay may be utilized. A new tool needs to be developed. Currently a tool developed by the beef program is the best we have available, and it needs to be updated for dairy specific considerations. A team of dairy program members has convened to update old publications and spreadsheets and to review similar tools developed by the livestock team. The spreadsheet including many reference tables will become a resource on the dairy program website.

A survey for farmers, employers and employees who have different mother languages (Spanish and English) and do not speak each other's, where they provide information that helps us understand the strategies they use to bridge the language barrier and how that affects the activities at the farm.

Disruption in communications significantly decreases the farm's ability to onboard, manage, and retain employees, a critical task for successful operations. Optimal communications are a central piece to implementing successful workforce development programs. Additionally, the perception of employees regarding the language barriers on farms also remains unknown. A series of in person meetings with farmers, where we can discuss their challenges and the opportunities for the current research and future programming. As a Bilingual Regional Dairy Educator, working with the farms who have language barriers is important. The goal is to develop resources that improve communication, safety, and productivity on farms. This work supports both farmers and their Spanish-speaking employees, and it addresses broader issues by helping create more inclusive and effective workplaces in the industry.

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Community Development provides educational programming to assist leaders, communities, and organizations realize their fullest potential. We work with communities to build the vitality that enhances their quality of life and enriches the lives of their residents. We educate in leadership development, organizational development, food systems, community economic development, local government education and much more. In short, the Community Development Institute plants and cultivates the seeds for thriving communities and organizations.

Educator: Patricia Malone

Planning for programming utilizing the First Impressions framework in collaboration with the City of Columbus and the City of Dodgeville. The work will help each community develop a better understanding of what their community looks like through the lens of others, gain perspective of what other communities are doing to make their "first impression", and inspire both communities to engage in actions that will make improvements to their own communities. The Columbus team visited Dodgeville on June 11, 2025. The team's comments will be entered into a document that will be shared with the Dodgeville team.

Facilitated four community economic development conversations with local elected and appointed officials in four local communities. The work will provide this educator with information on issues and challenges throughout the county and it will provide participants an opportunity to share information and ideas with other officials. Twenty-seven individuals participated.

Taught a session on open meetings and open records at the New Clerk Boot Camp held in Juneau on June 17, 2025. Thirty-two clerks participated in the program. Participants were from around the state, but five participants were clerks or officials from Dodge County.

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FOOD SECURITY, HEALTHY EATING, AND HEALTHY LIVING



FoodWise advances healthy eating habits, active lifestyles and healthy community environments for families with limited incomes through nutrition education at the individual, community and systems levels. FoodWise reaches individuals and families through local community partners by providing nutrition classes in-person and virtually, indirect education (newsletters, etc.), and social media/marketing. FoodWise is an obesity prevention program that addresses policy, system and environmental changes through local and state public health efforts. FoodWise is federally funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).

Educator: Kimberly Lafler

There are not many no cost/low-cost exercise opportunities for residents in Dodge County. FoodWise partnered with different agencies in Dodge County to be able to provide free strength training series for adults and seniors. An 8-week strength training series, StrongBodies, was started for adults and seniors of Dodge County where participants were able to learn proper techniques for strength training which increases strength, bone density, balance and social connectedness. This increases overall feelings of health and wellness which can enable participants to age in place with better health.

The conclusion of a 15-week series of Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention in Dodge County, where older adults learn and practice Tai Chi along with learning nutrition and additional health education. Participants engage in regular Tai Chi exercises to improve balance, flexibility and weight transfers. This helps to prevent falls which can help seniors age in place. Participants reported feeling more sure footed when walking. Including stretches learned into their daily routines has helped with stiffness. Many looked forward to the social connections made during the time. All of these things are important for general health, well being and being able to age in place.

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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS



*The Extension Institute of **Human Development & Relationships** provides the tools Wisconsinites need to thrive as well-rounded, capable individuals and families. We support families in caring for each other in ways that promote growth and understanding. Our programs promote aging-friendly communities, coach effective parents and help families put technology, mindfulness and financial awareness to use.*

Educator: Pattie Carroll

Carroll is planning a parent **workshop for families of incoming kindergarteners**, in collaboration with local schools and early childhood educators. The goal is to equip parents with effective strategies to support their child's transition to kindergarten—ensuring children enter school confident, prepared, and ready to thrive both academically and socially.

In response to the growing need for family support during this critical transition, we are co-creating an interactive session that offers practical tools, developmental insights, and hands-on strategies. By focusing on social-emotional development and strengthening home-to-school connections, the workshop will empower parents to become confident advocates and active participants in their child's educational journey—laying a strong foundation for long-term success.

Carroll recently participated in the third annual **Family Fest**, a vibrant community event coordinated by Dodge County Public Health to support families and caregivers. Alongside AmeriCorps from my office, we hosted an exhibit booth as part of a larger collaboration with numerous family-serving agencies. Together, we shared valuable Extension resources focused on promoting family, 4-H activities and resources and child well-being.

More than 300 individuals engaged with local service providers and accessed practical, research-based tools for positive parenting, nutrition, and early childhood development. Our goal was to empower families with the knowledge and support needed to create healthy, nurturing environments where children can thrive. At our booth, we distributed materials such as *Focus on Fathers* flyers, *Just in Time Parenting* bookmarks, and 4-H youth development resources—all designed to strengthen parenting skills and build family resilience. This outreach was especially impactful in reaching fathers and caregivers who may not typically seek out parenting support.

By connecting families with evidence-based guidance and community resources, Family Fest helped address broader challenges such as early childhood education gaps, family stress, and social isolation. Ultimately, this event contributed to stronger, more connected families and supported the long-term well-being of our community.

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YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



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 after-school programs give young people the hands-on experiences they need to develop an understanding of themselves and the world.

Educator: Marie Witzel

A 3 night overnight summer camp at Camp Lakotah for 4-H campers from Columbia, Dodge, and Sauk counties in grades 3-8 where youth participated in an immersive camp experience featuring educational and recreational activities. Through this program, participants deepened their connection to the Wisconsin 4-H, enhancing their independence, leadership, and social skills. A youth mental health session for campers at Tri-County Camp to learn more strategies for calming down and making personal choices.

Youth mental health was identified as an area of need at the Dodge County Community Forum. This session has been one that I have used to teach youth in a variety of locations. Izzy, the Positive Youth Development Intern and I taught a session on youth mental health called Chill Out. The session is best described as life can be tough, but dealing with stress and making decisions doesn't have to be! Join us for a fun and interactive class where you'll learn how to handle stress and make smart choices through engaging activities and a hands-on game. From the session 68% of the youth indicated that the session taught them how to calm themselves down. Overall, at camp 78% of youth said they feel more confident and are able to do more things on their own, 98% shared they learned something new, and 71% answered they found out they liked trying new things, even if they're hard at first.

Citizenship Washington Focus, or CWF for short, is the premier week long 4-H citizenship and leadership experience. CWF brings 4-H delegations from all over the country to stay in Washington D.C. Participants learn about the roles of Senators and Representatives in the United States' government and how these parts work together to form an effective Congress. Additionally, youth get to see and experience government in action by meeting with their State's members of Congress and watching a House of Representatives meeting.

Youth were able to see citizenship in action both at the Capitol, visiting memorials and monuments, and in their group work at the conference. They also learned youth who deepened their appreciation for leadership and civic government. Along with the youth learning about CWF, they also grew in their confidence, willingness to try new things and independence.

After completing the CWF program, they will have stronger knowledge about being an active citizen and our Government. They will also have the opportunity to discover new skills and be exposed to different perspectives and cultures from around the U.S.

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