

Monthly Highlights February 2026

Agriculture - Crops

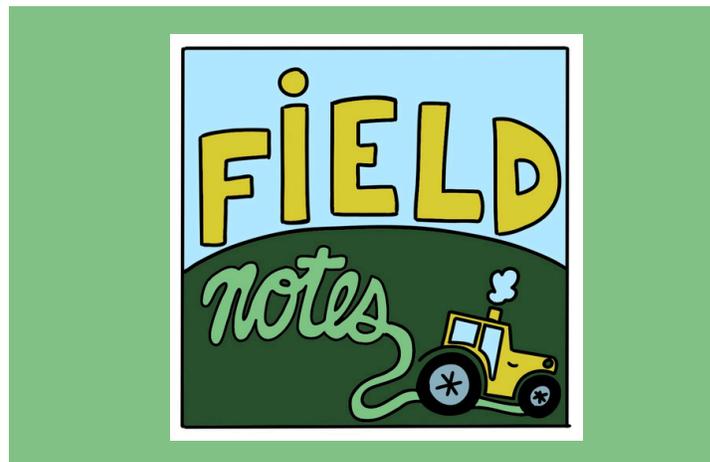
Educator: Will Fulwider

A pre-recorded audio based educational series called "Field Notes" for farmers, agronomists, and the public, where listeners learn research-based solutions to issues facing agriculture. The goal of this effort is to increase the adoption of best management practices on farms that encourage long term productivity and profitability of Wisconsin farms by sharing research-based information and relevant farmer experiences.

A special series based on on-farm nutrient management was released on Field Notes in December, targeting nutrient management season for farmers. The series has had 432 listens since being released in early December. The goal of this effort was to provide farmers who do not currently utilize nutrient management plans with an overview, broken into bite sized chunks, of the importance of nutrient management for their profitability and water quality. Total Reach: Total listenership to the podcast was 4,451 listens for 2024 with nearly 6,000 listens all time. Several episodes have garnered close to 700 listens for each episode.

There are more methods and avenues for information distribution available to farmers than ever before. Coupled with this increased accessibility

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.



to information is a preponderance of information that farmers must sort through to determine what is correct and applicable to their farm. Extension must meet the need of having multiple methods through which it disseminates information, in order for research-based information to play on the same stages as anecdotal approaches. Knowing that farmers spend a lot of time on their equipment and podcasts are a popular form of information consumption, Field Notes brings research-based information on agriculture to the podcast medium. Knowing as well that farmers appreciate the ability to hear how other farmers are using a new technology, practice, or adapting to challenging conditions, Field Notes strives to pair someone within Extension who specializes in the area with a farmer to convey the information in a way that is both research-based and practical. We produce about 10 30 minutes episodes a year. Total listenership to the podcast was 4,451 listens for 2024 with nearly 6,000 listens all time. Several episodes have garnered close to 700 listens for each episode.



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
DODGE COUNTY

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Agriculture - Dairy

Educator: Manuel Peña

A webinar for dairy farmers and ag professionals that focused on an in-depth look at high-oleic soybeans and their role in both crop production and dairy nutrition. The purpose of this webinar was to provide participants with unbiased, evidence-based research about high oleic soybeans.

High oleic soybeans are a new variety to crop producers. However, there are differences in growing, performance, and management of these beans. There are also differences in how we feed these beans based on their fatty acid profile. To address this gap, a webinar was organized for dairy farmers and ag professionals to talk about the difference in growing and feeding the beans. A webinar brought in both Conley, Goldsmith, and Lippert as speakers to address the agronomics of growing and feeding of high oleic soybeans.

A bilingual article written for dairy farmers and industry professionals where we discussed the importance and impact of Body Condition Score (BCS). The purpose of the article is to help farmers measure it on farms to help prevent digestible disorders at different stages of production, and to increase efficiency of the cows.

Fresh cow issues cost producers approximately \$8 billion each year in the United States, representing

The Dairy Program offers education by holding in-person meetings and live webinars, as well as developing resources such as articles, factsheets, and videos.

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.



a significant economic burden on the dairy industry. A substantial portion of these problems can be traced back to the cow's body condition at the time of calving, which plays a crucial role in determining her health, productivity, and ability to transition smoothly into lactation. Cows that are either too thin or too fat at calving are more susceptible to a range of metabolic disorders, such as ketosis, milk fever, and displaced abomasum, all of which can compromise milk production, increase veterinary costs, and even lead to early culling. Proper management of body condition during the dry period and close-up phase is therefore essential to minimizing these fresh cow issues and improving both animal welfare and farm profitability.

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Human Development & Relationships

Educator: Pattie Carroll

In January, Human Development and Relationships Educator Carroll taught a parenting class at the Parenting Resource Place focused on the importance of establishing consistent family routines. Research shows that routines support a wide range of positive child development outcomes—cognitive growth, self-regulation, social-emotional well-being, and overall health. A 2024 systematic review found that routines serve as a protective factor, particularly in high-stress environments, by providing children with stability, predictability, and a greater sense of security. Additional research highlights that steady routines help reduce anxiety, strengthen behavior control, improve sleep patterns, and reinforce caregiver-child relationships through dependable daily interactions. These insights informed Carroll's teaching and offered parents practical, research-supported strategies for integrating routines into daily life.

Carroll also devoted time in January to planning upcoming programming. This included preparing for the Raising Wisconsin Children conference scheduled for February, ensuring a well-organized

Human Development and Relationship programs in Dodge County focus on parenting, family relationships, aging, and financial education. We support resilient individuals and families from cradle to grave. Our programs offer research-based classes and resources for parents, caregivers, and professionals to promote child and family development. We also help families achieve financial well-being and build capacity among family-serving practitioners. Additionally, we support aging individuals with end-of-life planning and local partnerships. Responding to local needs our programs also promote mental health and well-being through evidence-based initiatives.



and meaningful learning experience for families statewide. Carroll additionally worked on planning for the WeCOPE offering at Dodge Correctional. WeCOPE is an evidence-based stress-management program grounded in the positive emotions research of Dr. Judith Moskowitz, designed to help adults cope with life stress through skills such as gratitude, mindfulness, positive reappraisal, and self-compassion. The program runs for six to seven weeks with one-hour sessions that teach 11 practical coping strategies shown to reduce stress, increase positive affect, and improve health behaviors. Planning efforts this month focused on adapting schedules, preparing materials, and coordinating logistics to support successful implementation within the correctional setting.

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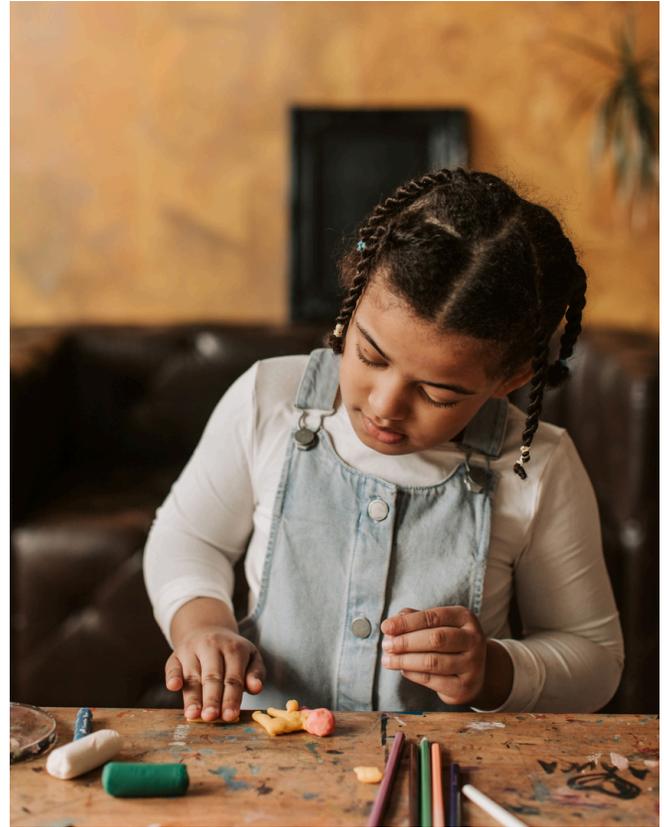
Positive Youth Development

Educator: Marie Witzel

I recently participated in an outreach segment on Hometown Today to introduce community members and 4-H families to the concept of youth “sparks” and highlight the upcoming Spark Your Sparks lesson plan that will be implemented in club meetings. The segment, now available on YouTube, has reached 44 viewers so far, with the potential for continued growth. During the livestream, I explained what sparks are—interests or passions that give young people energy and purpose—and why they play such an important role in positive youth development. Research shows that when youth can name and explore their sparks, they experience increased well-being, resilience, and motivation. However, many young people struggle to identify their sparks or do not have multiple supportive adults who encourage them, creating a need for intentional programming and family awareness.

The broadcast helped raise community understanding of how sparks support confidence, belonging, and mental well-being. I introduced the Spark Your Sparks lesson plan, which includes activities such as “Name Your Sparks” and “Share Your Sparks,” and explained how volunteers and educators can use these tools in club meetings to support youth in

Positive Youth Development prepares the youth of today to become the effective, empathetic adults of tomorrow. Our research-based youth enrichment programs 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.



grades 3–5, with adaptations for older members. Families and community members learned how they can play a role in helping youth discover what excites them and connect with caring adults who can nurture those interests.

In addition to the outreach, we piloted an interactive Spark Your Sparks lesson designed for educators. The one-hour program begins with a warm-up activity to build connection, followed by opportunities for youth to identify their sparks, share them with peers, and recognize adults who can help them explore those passions. Through this work, we aim to create spaces—both in clubs and the broader community—where youth feel seen, supported, and inspired to grow.

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