



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
DODGE COUNTY

Monthly Highlights March 2026

Agriculture - Crops

Educator: Will Fulwider

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.

The further refinement of the research plan for the Dodge County Research Farm. Established baseline soil sampling protocols with farmers and selected a small field to run a soil health demonstration trial to provide data on possible soil health gains from crop rotation, cover crops, and livestock integration.

The county owned land surrounding the airport is an opportunity for the county to showcase some of the practices that the county would like to see implemented across the county. Furthermore, it presents the county, Extension, and local farmers with an opportunity to collaborate and bring more local research to the area. A big question of conservation agriculture amongst farmers is does it hurt the pocketbook. The goal of the approach of this research plan is to test how no till agriculture fares in three different farm management scenarios to see if economically it is able to perform as well as more conventionally minded approaches. This also presents an opportunity to compare these three management approaches against each other economically to evaluate whether UW recommendations produce the best financial outcomes vis a vis the value cropping and yield chasing approaches.



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Agriculture - Dairy

Educator: Manuel Peña

A weekly Thursday dairy radio segment for dairy producers, consultants, agency staff, and other industry professionals to share updates about state and local Extension resources, information, and events relevant to dairy operations. The goal of this effort is to maintain a regular connection between the dairy community and Extension resources, providing tools and timely insights to support informed decision-making related to herd management, nutrition, reproduction, farm profitability, among others.

As another Agriculture Educator in my area has already built a strong connection with farmers through regular radio updates, I have been invited to contribute a dairy-focused segment as part of the daily Farm Report. This provides a valuable opportunity to engage an established agricultural audience and expand Extension's outreach within the dairy community. Through this segment, it is possible to share research-based, science information relevant to dairy producers, along with timely updates on educational events, resources, and tools that can support informed decision-making and strengthen farm viability. Agricultural producers use a variety of sources to obtain information, including radio. Each Thursday morning, I provide a UW-Extension dairy segment as part of the daily Farm Report. This segment

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.



focuses specifically on timely dairy production topics, herd management strategies, seasonal nutrition and health considerations, and updates on upcoming events, webinars, and educational opportunities relevant to dairy operations. Delivering this information through public media allows us to reach producers who may be underserved, unable to attend in-person programs, or unaware of Extension's agricultural resources. This expanded outreach strengthens our connection with the dairy community and helps ensure that research-based information is accessible, practical, and timely. Additionally, the segment provides dairy producers with greater insight into the work being done through Extension and creates consistent opportunities for them to engage in programs that support informed decision-making, farm profitability, environmental stewardship, and long-term business sustainability.



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Human Development & Relationships

Educator: Pattie Carroll

A monthly parenting program for fathers where participants learn skills to build their children's social and emotional learning. This series is designed to improve understanding of positive parenting practices, while providing social connections for fathers and father figures.

Despite recent advances in research on fathers' roles and unique contributions within families, fathers remain underserved in family-based programming (Panter-Brick et al., 2014). This is due to barriers originating from community partners, cultural norms, legal structures, and fathers' abilities or desires to participate. Yet, fathers' contributions to child and family well-being are critical. Children with more engaged fathers exhibit higher academic achievement, better psychological outcomes, and fewer challenging or delinquent behaviors (e.g., Allen and Lo, 2012; Lee and Schoppe-Sullivan, 2017). Fathers' engagement is particularly vital for vulnerable children, such as those from single-parent and low-income households (e.g., Choi and Pyun, 2014). After data analysis from a statewide fatherhood needs assessment, extension faculty, specialists and educators learned that fathers are interested in direct

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.



parenting education and opportunities to connect with and learn from other fathers. As a response a team created the Focus on Fathers parenting program.



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Positive Youth Development

Educator: Marie Witzel

Witzel facilitated the 2026 4-H Family Learning Day, creating a high-impact learning environment through more than 30 hands-on, youth-centered workshops. The event strengthened STEM understanding, animal science knowledge, environmental stewardship, and creative problem-solving. Sessions such as Robotics, Beef 101, Marsh Haven Wildlife, and Spark Your Sparks provided meaningful opportunities for youth to practice new skills, explore interests, and build confidence. Instructors were consistently rated “very well prepared” and “very engaging,” reflecting strong instructional quality. Families reported that the experience was valuable, affordable, and well organized, with many noting significant increases in their child’s enthusiasm for learning. Youth demonstrated clear knowledge gains, frequently describing sessions as educational and informative, while families discovered new pathways into 4-H programs such as American Spirit, Sparks, and 4-H Camp. Many participants identified emerging Sparks, highlighting the program’s role in helping youth connect learning to personal passions and future growth.

During the February 21, 2026 Dodge County Family Learning Day, 11 youth participated in a

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.



Spark Your Spark session I led to identify their sparks, share them, and name supportive adults. All participating youth were 4-H members. Sparks data showed strong interest in STEM and Environmental/Outdoor Education (each 27%), followed by Agriculture & Animal Science and Expressive Arts (each 18%), and Leadership & Community (9%). Youth expressed passions such as building, RC cars, Legos, ice fishing, 4-wheeling, farming, horses, music, and observing nature.

The Sparks Tally Sheet helped translate this local data into the statewide Sparks Data Collection Tool and guided program planning. Priority areas identified include STEM hands-on learning, outdoor and nature-based activities, agricultural experiences, and creative arts opportunities. This youth-driven data strengthens alignment between programming and member interests, supports positive youth development, improves statewide reporting, and enhances targeted outreach to engage youth in activities that nurture their sparks.

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