



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
DODGE COUNTY

Monthly Highlights

May 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.

Scouting camelina demonstration fields to increase local knowledge of factors that influence winter survival.

Worked with Universal Coop agronomists to visit various camelina fields that they had planted in collaboration with local farmers in order to determine why certain fields had success and others did not. This helped create a shared community of learning around this new cover crop for Wisconsin and create additional buy-in from agriculture industry.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming in compliance with state and federal law.



## Monthly Highlights May 2026

# Agriculture - Dairy

### *Educator: Manuel Peña*

A train the trainer safety toolbox program for farm operations, safety consultants, educators, and instructors where they find materials to lead or support agricultural safety training by following an interactive guide and adult-learning principles to encourage participation, ownership, and responsibility, while encouraging a Safety Culture.

This program was developed in response to feedback from dairy producers who expressed a need for practical, on-farm training to reduce injuries and accidents and maximize animal performance. In response, we designed this effort to deliver targeted, farm-based education focused on real-world scenarios and immediate application, with the goal of improving worker safety, animal welfare and profitability. The bilingual Forward Farm Safety Toolbox is based on solid research and is designed to help agricultural operations create a strong safety culture. This foundation supports long-lasting behavior changes and ongoing leadership support for safety. The toolbox includes a hands-on training tools that helps farms, consultants, and instructors lead training sessions using a 20-40-40 model: 20% learning, 40% exploring, and 40% solving. This approach makes safety training more interactive than traditional presentations. Using adult-learning principles, it encourages participants to take

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.



ownership and responsibility. The added learning materials further support a workplace where safe behaviors become part of everyday farm life. This whole approach was tested in a pilot session to get feedback from the people who would be using it. Through pilot testing with farmers, participants reported improved understanding of workplace risks and identified specific changes they could implement immediately, such as safer animal handling, and tractor safety practices and clearer communication protocols among employees. Feedback from the pilot also helped refine the training to better align with different farm conditions, increasing its relevance and usability. This work contributes to broader societal goals by promoting safer agricultural workplaces, reducing the risk of injury, and supporting the well-being of farm employees.



**Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
DODGE COUNTY

## Monthly Highlights May 2026

# Positive Youth Development

***Educator: Marie Witzel***

A series of 4-H youth development efforts highlighted the impact of youth voice, leadership, and civic engagement at the local, state, and national levels. A delegation of eight Wisconsin youth and two chaperones represented the state at the National 4-H Conference, engaging with federal agencies and meeting with Congressional Representatives to advocate for continued 4-H funding through the U.S. Farm Bill. Selected for their extensive multi-year 4-H involvement, youth collaborated in multi-state teams to address challenge questions posed by federal agencies and presented innovative solutions. Delegates also strengthened their civic understanding by connecting their personal experiences to policy advocacy, demonstrating the broader impact of 4-H programming.

At the county level, Sparks activities were conducted with Juneau Victorians (21 youth participants) and River Oaks (31-40 youth participants) 4-H clubs to intentionally center youth voice and better understand individual interests. Youth identified their personal “sparks”—interests that bring them joy and purpose—across areas including outdoor and environmental education, agriculture, sports, STEM, creative expression, and relationships. These structured yet youth-driven activities allowed participants to

*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.*



share authentic responses while contributing to the Wisconsin 4-H Sparks Data Collection Tool.

Across both clubs, findings revealed strong interest in hands-on, outdoor, and relationship-based activities, along with emerging interests in creative and exploratory areas. This information provided actionable insights for educators and volunteer leaders to design more responsive programming, align opportunities with youth passions, and encourage leadership connected to individual strengths.

Collectively, these efforts demonstrate the value of elevating youth voice—from informing club-level programming decisions to influencing national policy conversations—while building skills in leadership, communication, and civic responsibility.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming in compliance with state and federal law.