



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
DODGE COUNTY

Monthly Highlights August 2026

Agriculture - Crops

Educator: Will Fulwider

The Agriculture - Crops Program supports Dodge County farmers through applied research, educational programs, demonstrations, and practical resources. The program connects producers with current research and innovative management practices related to crop production, soil health, conservation, and emerging agricultural issues. By bringing research and education directly to local farms, we help producers make informed decisions, improve productivity and profitability, and build resilient agricultural systems for the future.



Grazing Field Day: Frost Seeding & Grazing Management

Regional Crops Educator Will Fulwider helped plan the August 6 Grazing Field Day: Frost Seeding & Chill in partnership with the Dodge County Land & Water Conservation Department and helped facilitate the farmer-led event at High-Gem Holsteins & Normandes in southeast Dodge County. Nearly 40 participants attended the pasture walk, which focused on frost seeding, utilizing existing hay ground for grazing, rotational grazing management, and watershed-friendly farming practices. Participants evaluated first-, second-, and third-year frost-seeded fields, toured the farm's grazing system, and heard from Chris and Brenda Conley about their experience transitioning hay ground into grazing acreage. An open Q&A allowed beginning and experienced graziers to discuss challenges and share ideas. The event was co-hosted by Dodge County Land & Water Conservation, Dodge County Extension Crops Division, and Dodge County Farmers for Healthy Soil & Healthy Water, with promotional support from Glacierland RC&D. The event highlighted Extension's role in supporting farmer-led education and connecting agricultural partners across Dodge County.

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

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Agriculture – Dairy

Educator: Manuel Peña

Corn Silage Dry Matter Testing Supports Timely Harvest Decisions

During August and September, Extension provided corn silage dry matter testing opportunities for dairy farmers and forage growers in the region. Samples were collected each Wednesday from August 26 through September 9, providing producers with timely information during the critical corn silage harvest period.

Dry matter content is an important factor in determining the proper timing for corn silage harvest. Harvesting at the appropriate moisture level supports good fermentation, helps preserve nutrients, reduces storage losses, and contributes to more consistent forage quality. Producers who harvest too early or too late can experience reduced feed quality, storage challenges, and potential nutrient losses.

Through this regional testing effort, farmers were able to submit corn silage samples and receive dry matter information to help evaluate whether their crop was ready for harvest. Providing this information at the time producers are making harvest decisions allows them to use current,

Dairy Extension brings research-based education and practical resources to dairy farms across Wisconsin. Through local educators, university specialists, workshops, webinars, and farm-based support, Extension helps producers navigate challenges, make informed decisions, and strengthen the future of dairy farming.



field-specific data rather than relying solely on estimates or general recommendations. The testing program served producers beyond a single county, strengthening Extension's role in providing timely agricultural education and resources throughout Dodge County and the surrounding region. The information gained from dry matter testing can also support subsequent dairy diet formulation by helping producers and nutrition professionals better understand the quality and characteristics of the forage entering storage.

By providing accessible, timely information during harvest, Extension helped producers make more informed decisions aimed at maximizing corn silage quality, preserving valuable nutrients, and supporting efficient dairy production.

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Positive Youth Development

Educator: Marie Witzel

The highlight of August was the successful participation of Dodge County 4-H in the Dodge County Fair. Throughout the week, Marie Witzel maintained a strong presence at the fair, providing support and encouragement to 4-H youth members and volunteers as they showcased the results of their year-long project work. This included assistance with exhibits, educational project displays, and support for participants involved in the meat animal, small animal, dairy youth sales and other popular project areas. The fair continues to be one of the most visible and impactful opportunities for youth to demonstrate skill development, responsibility, and leadership gained through the 4-H program.

Marie also helped coordinate and promote 4-H through the 4-H Promotion Booth, which engaged fairgoers with hands-on daily activities such as leathercraft keychain making and cardboard minion crafts. Additional attractions included a photo booth and the popular Goose Chase online activity, providing an interactive way for families and community members to learn more about 4-H opportunities. This year also included a radio spot on WBEV Community Comment to highlight youth engagement.

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.



In addition to the fair, AmeriCorps members supervised by Marie continued to deliver high-quality youth programming. Activities included a hands-on pudding-making workshop for elementary-aged youth that taught food safety, nutrition, measuring skills, and communication through experiential learning. A Science of Bubbles program at the Juneau and Lomira Libraries introduced elementary and middle school youth to STEM concepts through interactive experiments that encouraged curiosity, problem-solving, and exploration.

Marie coordinated a series of 4-H project sessions led by trained volunteers. These sessions provided youth with opportunities to develop project-specific skills, build confidence, and strengthen relationships with positive adult mentors, supporting continued engagement in 4-H and positive youth development throughout Dodge County.

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Human Development & Relationships

Educator:

Julia Oswald Tilton

August marked the start of Julia Oswald Tilton's role as Dodge County's Human Development & Relationships Educator. Originally from Milwaukee, Julia recently completed a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from the University of Minnesota and brings 11 years of experience as an elementary school educator. She expressed enthusiasm for continuing her educational work in a new capacity through UW-Madison Extension, where she will focus on addressing local needs and strengthening individual, family, and community well-being.

As part of her initial work plan, Julia will focus on several priority areas, including the Lunch and Learn series in partnership with Dodge County Human Resources, mental health education and outreach, and support for early childhood care providers. During her first month, she participated in onboarding activities with both the Dodge County Extension Office and UW-Madison Extension to build connections, gain familiarity with local needs, and prepare for upcoming programming efforts.

Dodge County Extension supports individuals and families at every stage of life through research-based education in parenting, family relationships, financial well-being, aging, and mental health. Programs and resources strengthen families, support caregivers and professionals, and connect communities with practical tools for well-being and resilience.



Despite being new to the role, Julia quickly began representing Extension in the community. She appeared on WBEV's Hometown Today radio program, where she introduced herself as the new Human Development & Relationships Educator and discussed Wisconsin's new school phone policies. During the interview, she explored the potential impacts of these policies on youth, families, and schools, while sharing Extension resources that can help families navigate changing expectations around student phone use.

Julia's strong educational background, commitment to community engagement, and willingness to step into public-facing opportunities immediately have provided a solid foundation for her work in Dodge County. We look forward to the positive impact of her programming and partnerships in the months ahead.