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## Washington County Ag Report August 31, 2004

Contributors are Sandy Buxton, Colleen Converse, Aaron Gabriel, Laura McDermott, and JJ Schell.

**“Doing good to others is not a duty. It is a joy, for it increases your own health and happiness.” -- Zoroaster**

### Announcements

**THE LAST “AG REPORT” FOR 2004 WILL BE SEPTEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup>. You can renew your “Ag Report” subscription when you renew your regular newsletter subscription. Our new subscription form offers each newsletter separately at its own price.**

**Wednesday, September 15 at 6 p.m. – Forage Producer Meeting** – Agri-logic (USDA subcontractor) needs your input on how to develop effective forage crop insurance programs for the Risk Management Agency (USDA). Commodity programs focussed on the midwest may soon be history, and crop insurance for all types and sizes of farms is the wave of the future. Please come to this free dinner and discussion, at the Fort Edward Firehouse. Call me to register, 800-548-0881. AG

**Thursday, September 16, 2004 - Organic Vegetable Production for a NYC Greenmarket,** Westtown, NY. For more information, to register and directions contact Regional Farm & Food Project, 518-271-0744.

**Saturday & Sunday, Sept 18 & 19, 2004 Northeast Small Farm & Rural Living Expo** Educational workshops, lectures, and demonstrations, as well as a farm market. Ulster County Fairgrounds, New Paltz, NY. See [www.smallfarmexpo.org](http://www.smallfarmexpo.org), or call Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County, 845/340-3990. Vendors wanted, contact Larry Hulle, 845/344-1234.

**Monday September 27 from 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. – Composting Demo for Road-killed Deer Carcasses** – meet at the Washington County Conference Room 2 (at the rear of the CCE parking lot). If you want to learn about carcass composting and have not heard or read enough from me already, then come to this demonstration to see how it is done. It is free, but please call our office to register, 800-548-0881. AG

**Tuesday & Wednesday, Sept. 28-29, 8-5 am –Agricultural Assessment School** –continuing education credit course for tax assessors to learn about issues related to assessing agricultural properties. Includes a field trip. For more information, call 272-4210.

**Saturday & Sunday, October 2 & 3.** Vermont Sheep and Wool Festival. Champlain Valley Expo, Essex Jct., VT. **For complete details, visit our Vermont Sheep and Wool Festival web page.** Contact Ellen Minard, [halfpintfarm@valley.net](mailto:halfpintfarm@valley.net), 802/649-5420 or Kat Smith, [katsmith@vemontel.net](mailto:katsmith@vemontel.net), 802/446-3325.

**Thursday, October 7, 2004 - Winning Fields Seminar,** Doubleday Field in Cooperstown, NY. Educational sessions for the sports turf professional. For more information contact NYSTA at 800-873-8873. LM

**Sunday, October 10, 2 - 4 PM, Old and New Fruit Crops with Commercial Potential for Small Farms. Orchard Tour** hosted by author, grower, and researcher Lee Reich at his experimental home orchard in New Paltz, NY. (Ulster County). Hardy Kiwi, Paw Paw, Gooseberry, and Serviceberry are a few examples of the multitude of species and varieties his orchard contains. Tour will cover growing requirements, marketability, and taste tests of some of the unusual fruits as well as touching on more common fruit crops like grapes and blueberries. Free and open to all. Sponsored by the Regional Farm & Food Project, 518/271-0744, farmfood@capital.net

**NY Food for NY Kids Week – October 2 – 10** - Every year, more school cafeterias are featuring NY farm products, classrooms do food-tastings, or students visit farms and farmers' markets. To take advantage of this opportunity to promote/sell your crops go to <http://www.prideofny.com/Farm2School.html>

**Sunday – Wednesday, October 17-20, 2004 - International Maple Tour**, Roaring Brook Resort and Conference Center, Lake George. This multi-day conference offers tours, educational sessions and interaction with hundreds of maple producers from the entire Northeast region and Canada. Hosted by the Upper Hudson Maple Producers. For more information and to register contact Mike Hill, 518-623-9783. LM

**Monday - Wednesday, October 18-20**, NE Greenhouse Conference Centrum Center in Worcester, MA for information call 1-802-655-7769.

**Tuesday – Thursday, October 19–21 – Setting the Table: Tools and Techniques for a Sustainable Food System** – a Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Conference in Burlington, VT. Topics include marketing, ag production, food policy, communications, and “learning from farmers”, plus farm tours. Register by Sept. 15, \$125. Call 802-656-0471.

**Saturday, October 23, 2004- Barn Tour and Barn Dance**, self -guided tour offers a look at 7 local barns and the Barn Dance finishes the day with down-home fun. Proceeds will benefit the programming of Cornell Cooperative Extension in Washington County. For more information call 800-548-0881. LM

**Tuesday, October 26, 9:30am – 3 p.m. – Field Crop Dealer Meeting** - at Comfort Suites, 7 Northside Dr., Clifton Park. Update by Cornell professors of their latest field crop research. DEC and CCA Credits available. \$10 registration at the door.

**Midwest Commodity Prices - from the Wall Street Journal**

Corn per bushel	\$2.22/bu	Cotton Seed Meal per ton	\$152/ton
Soybean per bushel	6.35/bu	Corn Gluten Feed	62/ton
Hominy Feed per ton	52/ton	Wheat, soft white	3.89/bu
48% Soybean meal per ton	203/ton	Tallow per pound	.19/lb

These prices are provided only to show where the general market trends are moving and to help you determine appropriate ration ingredients. Local prices will vary due to shipping, processing, and discounts.

**Weather Data – 2004 and average of 1999 - 2003**

	<b>Argyle</b>		<b>Easton</b>		<b>Whitehall</b>		<b>Jackson</b>	
	<b>2004</b>	Average '99 – '03	<b>2004</b>	Average '99 – '03	<b>2004</b>	Average '99 – '03	<b>2004</b>	Last Year
<b>Rain</b> Past Week	<b>0.98</b>	0.61	<b>0.90</b>	0.61	<b>1.39</b>	0.41	<b>0.84</b>	0.20
So far this month	<b>8.47</b>	3.43	<b>7.40</b>	3.62	<b>8.35</b>	3.11	<b>5.27</b>	4.89
Total since April 1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>26.61</b>	17.47	<b>25.03</b>	17.96	<b>24.21</b>	18.52	<b>22.53</b>	16.81
<b>GDD Base 41</b> Growing Degree Days = [hi temp + low temp]/2 – 41								
Past Week	<b>215</b>	187	<b>212</b>	189	<b>228</b>	194	<b>225</b>	171
Since April 1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>3260</b>	3310	<b>3321</b>	3391	<b>3661</b>	3599	<b>3292</b>	3380
<b>GDD 86/50</b> [hi temp + low temp]/2 - 50 High's >86°F are set to 86°F, low's <50°F are set to 50°F								
Past Week	<b>148</b>	129	<b>144</b>	131	<b>163</b>	136	<b>155</b>	119
Since April 1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>2234</b>	2268	<b>2312</b>	2330	<b>2536</b>	2479	<b>2274</b>	2333

**DAIRY:** Last week during the fair I was impressed with the quality of dairy cattle being showcased that had four or more lactations under their belt. As these older cows walked around the ring I noticed one common trait among all of them, strong feet and legs. On average, dairy cows of today's high production herds only last two to three lactations before leaving the farm for various reasons. A common cause for high cull rates on dairies is lameness, which can cost the dairy producer in excess of four hundred dollars per cow to treat and for losses in production. Dairy producers can take a proactive approach to lameness by paying close attention to nutritional factors affecting the ration. Major ingredients, like fiber and starch, have an impact on healthy hooves. A rule of thumb for maintaining adequate fiber levels expressed by researchers and nutritionists is, acid detergent fiber levels should be greater than 18 percent and neutral detergent fiber levels greater than 28 percent. Also consult your nutritionist or veterinarian to ensure adequate levels of vitamins and minerals that promote healthy cell growth are present in the ration. Minerals and vitamins like: copper, zinc, selenium, cobalt, manganese, iodine, biotin and vitamin E all promote healthy cell development, which in the long run, assist the cow to better withstand challenges to her health and production capabilities. A healthy cow is a productive cow and if enough attention is paid to overall cow health and nutrition, the end result will add years to her productive life.

**FARM BUSINESS MANAGEMENT:** watching people and working at different venues around the fairgrounds always reminds me why it is important for agriculture to work to maintain its strong profile at the fair as well as out in the community. Many people have no idea – no idea about regulations, where their food comes from, that milking doesn't hurt the cow, that calves grow up to be cows, that corn is used in more ways than just corn meal and popcorn, and so on. It all takes effort but is a valuable way to help provide some information.

**MANURE MANAGEMENT: Dairy Farmer Makes Value-Added Product from Manure**  
(Excerpted from ATTRA's Weekly Harvest Newsletter 8/11/04)

An Associated Press news story posted on Environmental News Network describes a new

product developed from dairy manure by Connecticut dairy farmer Matt Freund. Freund separates manure solids from liquid, and uses the solids to create biodegradable 3-inch planting pots. The pots offer a value-added use for dairy manure, which in many cases can be a farm liability, and they provide the plants in them with a fertilizer boost as the pot degrades in the soil. Freund isn't revealing his proprietary process, but has recently landed a federal grant that will allow him to purchase machinery to mass-produce the pots. He hopes to be supplying prototypes to growers by winter. URL: [http://www.enn.com/news/2004-08-10/s\\_26451.asp](http://www.enn.com/news/2004-08-10/s_26451.asp)

Another manure technology to remove nutrients from separated manure liquids by VSEP (vibratory shear enhanced process) is discussed at the company website, <http://www.vsep.com/markets/manure.html>.

My point here is that we need to think and look “out side of the lagoon” for manure management options. AG

**Agricultural Air Emissions:** Rest easy – for now! You should have read or heard that the dairy industry must comply with various federal clean air regulations. The good news is that the Agricultural Air Emissions Consent Agreement has not been finalized yet. So, you do not have to worry about the September 30 deadline to sign it and pay the associated fees. What size farms would be affected by these regulations? Two rough, *unofficial* estimates are dairies with 500 cows or more. However, stay tuned. Curt Gooch (Cornell Pro Dairy) has a website with information to keep you up to date on this very important issue. Call me or JJ if you want printed copies of the articles on this website. AG

[http://www.pro dairy facilities.cornell.edu/AE\\_Docs.htm](http://www.pro dairy facilities.cornell.edu/AE_Docs.htm)

### **CROPS**

**Soil Health:** You should take a soil test every three years to monitor pH and nutrient levels. All labs do a good job measuring the nutrients, but only Cornell can make fertilizer recommendations based on New York yield trials. You should also monitor the soil organic matter level. Is it going up or down? A typical sandy soil usually has a SOM% of 1 – 2 %; loams have 3 - 4% or so; and clays have 4 –5%. You can improve your soil health by increasing the organic matter. Do you notice a difference in yield among your sandy fields, loamy fields, or clay fields based on soil organic matter levels?

**Cover Crops:** Cover crops are a great way to improve soil quality. For a few bucks an acre you can spin on 3 bushels/ac of winter rye or winter wheat seed. It will reduce erosion; take up excess nutrients that would normally leach away; improve soil tilth and water infiltration; add organic matter to the soil; feed the soil organisms and more. Cover crops do offer some challenges as well. Depending on spring rainfall, they may help or hurt soil moisture. They can attract egg laying by cutworms. You will have plant debris to manage during tillage. Once plowed under or killed, cover crops need a week or two to break down before planting your crop. However, on the whole, “cover crops are the right thing to do.” AG

**Alfalfa:** We have had plenty of rain for summer seedings. Do not forget about them, but check them once or twice this fall to be sure that they grow okay and do not rot. Seedling diseases can develop if conditions remain wet. You want to know this October if you will have first cutting next year, not in May. Give established stands at least 42 days between the last two cuttings, to replenish root reserves. When you select alfalfa varieties for seeding next spring, select potato

leafhopper resistant varieties and consult with the Cornell Guide to pick varieties with good yield and disease resistance.

**Field Corn:** The most mature corn that I have seen so far had dented, but had not yet developed a milk line. As you harvest corn this year, keep a notebook handy to make notes on weed control, especially if you have used new herbicides. Weed problems can also indicate problems with pH or compaction. Strategies for silage harvest should include a separate storage for each feed based on quality, and using an inoculant or preservative. Moisture may be very variable within fields, so an inoculant or preservative that will help preserve a feed of variable moisture is important. If you use silage piles for storage, take the time to make a good pile. Information about silage piles can be found on the web at, <http://www1.uwex.edu/ces/pubs/pdf/A3511.PDF> (Drive-over Sialge Pile Construction), and <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/crops/uwforage/SilagePiles.htm> (Storing Forage in Piles). Call me if you want me to print you a copy. Following are the basic points:

- Pick a good site and improve it.
- Pack! Pack! Pack! Cover! Cover! Cover!
- Select a site to avoid mud and puddles and that can handle tractor traffic. It is best to construct a raised pad out of cement, asphalt or some other appropriate material. A 2% slope will help rain to runoff.
- Provide enough space to maneuver tractors and wagons.
- Slope the sides of the pile at 3:1 so that it can be safely and properly packed.
- The cross-sectional shape of the pile should be a trapezoid (for large piles) or a triangle (for small piles).
- Size the pile so that six to twelve inches of feed are removed each day.
- One way to pack the pile is by using the progressive wedge method, packing a layer of silage no more than six inches deep at a time.
- Another packing method is to begin at the centerline of the pile and run unloading wagons along each side of the centerline, and moving out as needed with each additional pass. Once you reach the desired width of the pile, run the wagons over the silage already unloaded (and packed) and start at the centerline again for the next layer. The pile should be 12 – 15 feet wide at the top and no more than 6 – 8 feet high. Once all the silage is unloaded, slope the sides and crown the top as needed before the final pack. Finish packing by going across and then length-wise.
- Cover the pile with 6-mil plastic as soon as the pile is complete.

**Grasses:** This weather is promoting diseases on grasses. If you have different varieties of the same grass species, it may be useful to evaluate which has the most disease resistance, since most companies do not provide much information on resistance of grasses to diseases.

**Pasture:** Uneaten clumps in pasture occur where cows poop and pee, right? Yes, but there may be other reasons. Walk through your pasture and see if these uneaten clumps may be clumps of tall fescue. Tall fescue leaves are shiny on the bottom and dull and almost grooved on the top surface. Native tall fescue has a fungus inside it (endophyte) that reduces animal performance, and sometimes can make them sick. If you find tall fescue in your pasture (or you may call me to take a look), it may be worthwhile to have the plants tested for the endophyte toxin. In my

own native fescue pasture, I have never seen any fescue toxicosis in the animals, but animal performance still may be reduced. Call me if you want me to identify fescue in your pasture or want plants sampled for the endophyte. AG

## **VEGETABLES**

**Cucurbits:** PUMPKIN AND WINTER SQUASH HARVEST AND STORAGE (adapted from UMass veg newsletter) Pumpkins and winter squash are maturing. Once the skin is hard, it's a good idea to get fruit harvested, since nothing good is going to happen out in the field where it faces attack by diseases, insects and weather. Early harvest and careful storage is almost always preferable to leaving fruit in the field. Even if pumpkins are only just starting to color up, they will continue to ripen off the vine if stored in a well-ventilated barn or greenhouse.

When harvesting, handle the fruit with care to avoid bruising or cutting the skin. These wounds let in decay organisms, which quickly break down fruit. Place fruit gently in containers and move bins on pallets. Use gloves to protect both the fruit and the workers. Removal of the stem from squash (butternut, Hubbard, etc.) will also decrease the amount of fruit spoilage because the stems frequently puncture adjacent fruit. A period of curing after harvest can help extend storage life of squash. This may be done in windrows in the field during a series of warm, dry days, or in a warm dry atmosphere (70 to 80°F) with good air circulation, such as a greenhouse, for up to 2 weeks. Curing before storage helps dry the outer cell layers which inhibits infection and helps clean cuts made during harvest to heal over. Take care to avoid exposing squash or pumpkin to chilling temperatures below 50 degrees F. Injury is worse when temperature decreases and/or length of chilling time increases. After curing, squash or pumpkins should be stored in a dry, well-ventilated area. Avoid tight packing, which limits air movement and can lead to condensation on fruit, or piling fruit too high, which can cause pressure bruises. The ideal storage conditions are 55 to 60°F with a relative humidity of 50 to 70%. Lower relative humidity increases water loss, resulting in reduced weight, and if excessive, shriveling of fruit. High relative humidity provides a favorable environment for decay. Under ideal conditions, disease-free pumpkins should have a storage life of 2 months and butternut squash up to 3 or 4 months. Storage in a shady, dry location, with fruit off the ground or the floor, is always preferable to leaving fruit out in the field.

**Edited from Vegetable Pest Status Aug. 27, 2004** By John Mishanec, IPM Veg Program

### **General Conditions**

After a week of heavy rains that came at us from the south, the past week has been a welcome sunny one. Crops that had slowed down are rapidly maturing. Cool evenings have also hindered the maturity of crops. I hate to sound like a broken record but it is very important to **keep scouting your fields**. There are ever increasing reports of downy mildew from Long Island, Massachusetts and New Jersey. **Late blight** has been found on tomatoes in two western NY counties. These problems are all around us and you need to catch them if they come to your farm. Don't put your **irrigation equipment** away just yet. Cool nights and a coming full moon might be an indicator of a **frost** coming soon. You may want to have your irrigation pipe set up in the crops you most want to protect like peppers, eggplant and tomatoes. If it does look like a frost is coming you will be ready sooner. Floating row cover is also a good protection against frost down to 20 degrees. If you have stakes in the field, staple beer cups on the top of the stakes so they do not rip the row cover. When covered, water will condense on the underside of the row

cover, freeze and protect the crop just like irrigation water. With all the problems we have had this summer, we may need to do more work to protect and keep the crops going longer.

### **Vine crops**

We have found **downy mildew** in one location in the Capital District and if there is one, there are probably many locations with the disease. Downy mildew has been found in many areas around us as a result of the storms coming up from the south. It is very important to walk your fields and look for downy mildew. Downy mildew attacks crops via spores carried north on the storms. You will not see one spot on the leaf. You will see many leaves with lots of yellow to brownish green spots on the upper surface. It will look like a checkerboard, as the spots will be limited by veins on the leaf. Spots are usually a half-inch to an inch in size. On the under side of the leaf, you will see dark brown to purple spores forming. You have around 5 to 7 days before the leaf collapses and it looks like a heavy killing frost knocked down the leaves. Stems will remain upright after the leaf collapses. Once you have found downy mildew, get in there as quickly as possible with a Ridomil spray. If your pumpkin crop is mature and ready for harvest, you might not need to spray, as the disease does not affect the fruit. If the fruit are still green and you need time to maturity, than a spray is called for.

Also check your pumpkins for late season **cucumber beetles**. When there is a large number of cucumber beetles late in the season, they can cause damage in the mature fruit. Walk the fields and if you see heavy numbers of beetles on the fruit, than a spray may be called for. Continue spraying for **powdery mildew**. This year, PM was late because of all the moisture. In most locations, growers were finding the first PM as late as mid August.

**Peppers** from John Gibbons, CCE

**Phytophthora** Blight is a problem this year on peppers on some farms. The most extensive damage is in the lower areas of fields. The first symptom of crown rot is a girdling black lesion at the base of the stem causing infected plants to completely wilt. Later in a wet season black girdling lesions 2-3 inches in length form in the axils of pepper branches. Fruit infection may also occur. Soft water-soaked lesions develop and within 1-2 days a white moist sporulation will appear if weather is wet/humid. Rogue out infected plants to prevent spread. Consider tolerant varieties such as Paladin and Aristotle, and higher beds to improve drainage. Early Ridomil drenches are used in other pepper production areas to reduce the problem. Rotate out of peppers, tomatoes and cucurbits with sweet corn or crucifers for 3 years. **Broad mites** were found in peppers recently. These are similar to spider mites, but are favored by cooler weather conditions. Symptoms included a bronzing on the fruit and curling of young leaves.

### **Sweet corn**

Looking back, it looks like we peaked in our trap catches of corn ear worm (CEW) about two weeks ago but we are still consistently catching an average of about 2 CEW moths per night in many if not most locations. European corn borer (ECB) numbers are down as well probably because of the cool nights. With the CEW still present it is advisable to **stay on a 5-6 day schedule for all corn with fresh silks**.

**Greenhouse:** The mums look beautiful everywhere I've been. This year was the first in several years that I was able to get mums that were in flower for our booth at the fair. I am sure that the cooler than normal weather that we had in mid-August helped set buds. Keep your eye out for fungus gnat larvae if you have container grown mums – actually I do not know of anyone in our county that is still doing field production of these plants – give me a call if you are – I would like to get some photos. According to Maryland Cooperative Extension, if you want to hold your

mums back a bit, feed nitrogen. This will stimulate some more vegetative growth (therefore larger plants) and delay flower opening.

**Landscape:** Lots and lots of powdery mildew on everything. We are still getting calls about foliar damage on trees as a result of insects or hail. Deciduous trees will most likely be fine even if they are being plagued by **Fall Webworm**. These insects should be controlled only if you have a very large population or the aesthetic consideration is too great. Spraying really has to begin in late June and early July, just when these insects start spinning their webs. Otherwise these insects do only minor damage at a time when the tree will lose its leaves anyway.

According to an article by Chuck Schmidt, Albany County CCE, deciduous trees can lose 40% of their leaves at any time during the season and experience no ill effects. This same rule of thumb does not hold true for conifers. Because conifer leaves (needles) remain intact throughout the year, the tree does not store as much reserve food and thus cannot initiate growth like a deciduous tree.

Fall plantings of Ornamental cabbage and kale should be on the lookout for **Flea beetles** which are out and actively feeding on foliage.

#### **Diazinon Cancellation**

Diazinon, an Organophosphate Insecticide - EPA announces the issuance of a cancellation order " ... as requested by registrants, of all outdoor non-agricultural end-use products containing diazinon ... Any distribution, sale, or use of the products subject to this cancellation order is only permitted in accordance with the terms of the existing stocks provisions of this cancellation order ..." - Effectively "immediately" - EPA OPPTS  
OPP Contact: Stephanie Plummer, Special Review and Reregistration Division at 703 305 0076; e-mail: [Plummer.Stephanie@EPA.gov](mailto:Plummer.Stephanie@EPA.gov) - EPA August 11 Federal Register:  
<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/06jun20041800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2004/04-18384.htm>

Sincerely,

Aaron D. Gabriel  
Extension Resource Educator  
Crops and Soils