



Preventing Injury on the Farm

On a spring day in 2013, Mr. James Daum, a farmer from Chemung County, was driving his 1967 John Deere Model 3010 tractor. He was using the tractor on a slight incline when his right front tire blew. Then his day turned frighteningly upside down. In an instant, Mr. Daum knew his tractor was going to roll over. All he could do was brace for the impact.

His son, standing nearby, feared he was about to watch his father die.

The tractor immediately pitched to the right, rolling as far as its roof before falling back onto its side. A newly-installed roll bar prevented the tractor from continuing to roll.

The rollover protection, along with a seatbelt, saved Mr. Daum's life. "No doubt, I would be dead," said Mr. Daum. "There was no escaping that tractor."

Instead, Mr. Daum emerged uninjured. While he may have been a bit shaken, he did not have a single scratch or bruise from the accident.



Mr. James Daum's tractor rests on its side after a rollover. The newly-installed roll bar protected Mr. Daum during the incident. (Photo courtesy of Mr. James Daum.)

Mr. Daum's farm, like so many in New York State, is located among the beautiful rolling hills and steep slopes typical of the Northeast. However, the characteristics that result in picturesque landscapes also pose a risk for the farmers who drive their equipment across such terrain. These geographic features may be part of the reason that rollover incidents are highest in the Northeast.

Sadly, too many farmers have lost their lives or been seriously injured in tractor rollovers. Many may be surprised to know that an estimated 80 percent of rollover incidents involve an experienced tractor operator.

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Yet, the installation of a basic rollover protective structure (ROPS) on a tractor can prevent a tractor rollover from turning into a tragedy. Mr. Daum's experience clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of rollover protection.



Before roll bar installation. (Photo courtesy of Mr. James Daum.)

The federal government now requires that all tractors with greater than 20 horsepower and manufactured after 1976 include an approved ROPS. While newer tractors do come configured with rollover protection, many farmers still use tractors that pre-date the manufacturing requirement. The longevity of these tractors is a tribute to both their inherent durability, as well as the level of care and maintenance that farmers invest in their equipment.

Even with the heightened risk posed by uneven terrain, the Northeast has the lowest percentage of tractors fitted with a ROPS. Given the number of tractors currently in use that predate the manufacturing requirement, it has been estimated that half of New York State's tractors do not have rollover protection installed.

It is an issue being addressed by the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health (NYCAMH), which is affiliated with both the Bassett Healthcare Network and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

NYCAMH oversees a ROPS Rebate Program in New York State. All administrative costs of the program are continually funded thanks to a recurring grant from NIOSH, which means that the funding received from the State is fully dedicated to rebates and outreach.

NYCAMH also receives several in-kind donations, such as outreach by the New York Farm Bureau to their members to inform them of the availability of this program.

The Rebate Program began in New York in 2006. Since then, over 1,300 tractors have been retrofitted with rollover protection through the program.

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One of those was Mr. Daum's tractor. It is a worthwhile investment. Follow-up surveys with farmers participating in the program report they experienced 14 rollovers, and 123 "close calls," such as a sliding or tipping.

It is very easy for farmers to participate in the program. "We keep the application process as simple as possible for farmers," said Ms. Barbara Bayes, ROPS Program Coordinator at NYCAMH.

Farmers can apply for the rebate online or by telephone, and NYCAMH has databases with extensive information detailing the type of ROPS needed for individual tractor models. The data also includes estimated cost, estimated rebate, and contact information for ROPS sellers. "This way, farmers do not have to spend time conducting their own research or guess which ROPS is appropriate for their tractor," said Ms. Bayes.

The rebate typically covers 70 percent of the purchase of the ROPS, which can also include shipping costs, professional installation, and a sun canopy. The average price of a ROPS is about \$1,000, and the maximum rebate that NYCAMH currently awards is \$865.

The process is straightforward. Ms. Bayes recommends that a farmer interested in a ROPS installation contact NYCAMH both to obtain information about specific ROPS types, and for preapproval to ensure that money is currently available for a rebate. The rebate funds are officially designated after the farmer places an order with a seller. Finally, the rebate is sent to the farmer within 30 days of receipt of proof of purchase and installation.

While a farmer does not have to purchase the ROPS from a pre-selected seller, the ROPS itself must be certified, which means its design has been tested for its intended use. This ensures that "sun canopies" alone are not mistaken for a ROPS, or that untested homemade supports are not utilized.

Additionally, a certified ROPS also comes equipped with a seatbelt that keeps the rider within the area protected by the roll bar in the event of an incident. In Mr. Daum's case, the seatbelt secured him inside this protective zone which further prevented injury. He was grateful for the ROPS and the seatbelt, noting that he could have been dangerously ejected from his seat had he not been wearing his seatbelt.

The seatbelt is a crucial component of the protective structure. In fact, a recent Pennsylvania State University study estimated that the use of a ROPS and a seat belt is 99 percent effective in preventing serious injury or death in the event of a tractor rollover.

The success of the program in New York has generated great interest in many other states and at a national level. Vermont,



After roll bar installation.
(Photo courtesy of Mr. James Daum.)

Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin have also started their own ROPS rebate programs largely based on the success of the New York program. Due to the popularity of the program in Vermont and Pennsylvania, this year's funds in those states have already been exhausted, and waitlists have been established for future participants.

Typically, the busiest time for the program is during the winter months when farmers are able to take more time to conduct maintenance on their farm equipment. Even after seeing greater interest in the program earlier this year, the program is fully funded. It is a priority for the New York State Senate, which has continued to include funding for the program in the State Budget, including \$150,000 for ROPS rebates for 2014, and \$100,000 in 2013. As a result, there is no waitlist for New York farmers to participate in the program.

"The New York State ROPS Rebate Program is a vital resource for New York farmers to help keep them, their families, and their employees safe when operating a tractor," said Ms. Bayes. "To me, one life saved makes this program extremely worthwhile, and we are so grateful for the rebate funding provided by the New York State Senate and Assembly Agriculture Committees."

Mr. Daum takes every opportunity to share his story with other farmers, and he encourages them to get roll bars installed on their tractors. It only took him two or three weeks to buy the roll bar and get it installed. Just one week later, he had the accident.

"Without that roll bar, I wouldn't be here," he said.

For more information, or to apply for a Rollover Protective Structure rebate, please call NYCAMH at (877) ROPS-R4U or visit www.ROPSR4U.com.

Flipping Physics

How a Science Teacher Reinvented His Classroom

When the school year wrapped up in June 2013, Mr. Robert Przedwiecki, a science teacher in the Scotia-Glenville School District in Upstate New York, was alarmed. For the past 15 years he had been teaching high school physics. He used a traditional approach: teaching students about a concept, working through sample problems, and sending students home with homework. It had been a tried and true approach.

But it was no longer effective.

Over the past decade, he watched with increasing concern as the attention span of his students seemed to grow smaller. It became more difficult to hold the focus of his students over the 40-minute class period. To address this trend, he adjusted his teaching method by breaking his lectures into smaller sections. Even so, he found he had to spend greater time each year re-lecturing on many topics, and it seemed that each subsequent class was further behind when June rolled around.

Mr. Przedwiecki is a dedicated teacher who is eager to see his students succeed. He knew it was time for a drastic change.

So, he decided to “flip” his classroom.

This was no literal flip. Classroom desks were not bolted to the ceiling – although, that might make for interesting physics demonstrations.

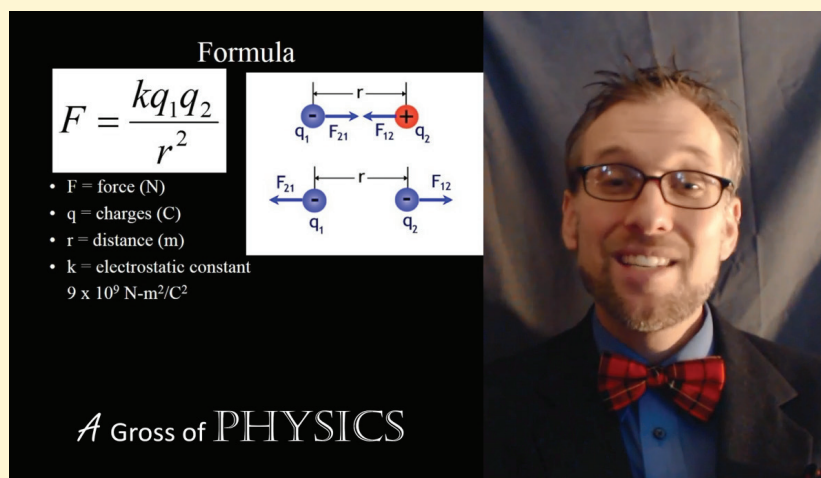
Instead, Mr. Przedwiecki took on the challenge of creating a course where students watch video lectures and take detailed notes as their homework assignment. Classroom time is similar to the recitation section of a college course, where students spend class time practicing what they learn from the lectures.

Yet, the process of creating a flipped classroom was no easy task. Mr. Przedwiecki had learned about this educational model being used on a smaller scale for individual units or lessons, but not for an entire class year.

In a typically scientific fashion, he conducted some quick calculations before planning the revised course. He realized he could effectively break the school year into 36 four-day weeks. Multiplying those two numbers resulted in 144 available lessons – a number sometimes referred to as a “gross.” He quickly recognized that the physics concepts covered in his class could be broken down into roughly the same number of video lectures. Not only had he come up with a way to break up physics into manageable segments, but he also discovered a catchy name for his new system: *A Gross of Physics*.

Mr. Przedwiecki knew creating the videos would require his focus and dedication throughout the summer. His initial plan was to record the videos in July, and then edit and upload them to YouTube in August.

Using his own money, he purchased a quality camera and microphone. He set up a backdrop in a corner of his living room, creating a recording area. His wife and children also supported his endeavor as they juggled the family’s schedule to create a quiet environment for at least a few hours each day. Even so, there were occasions where one of his children or the siren of a passing emergency vehicle interrupted a recording in progress.



Screenshot from one of Mr. Robert Przedwiecki’s physics lectures that students watch online as a homework assignment. (Courtesy of Mr. Robert Przedwiecki.)

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Even after creating a detailed plan, Mr. Przedwiecki was surprised at the time-consuming nature of the process. After the first week he had recorded only four videos. That pace picked up substantially in subsequent weeks as he became familiar with the equipment and made adjustments. However, it was quickly apparent that all the videos would not be complete in just two short months. By the time school started, he had only uploaded half of the videos.

Still, he implemented the program at the start of the 2013-2014 school year, and he finished the remaining videos on the weekends and during school vacations.

For his students, daily homework consists of an assignment to view a video lecture from the *A Gross of Physics* channel on YouTube. Students can also follow @AGrossofPhysics on Twitter to receive reminders of their daily assignments. Videos cover topics from freefall, to friction, to magnetic fields, and much more. Students fill in scaffolded notes about the video on note-taking sheets created by Mr. Przedwiecki.

The videos consist of much more than just a lecture. A split screen functions like a blackboard, displaying text or photos pertinent to the topic. Other segments provide a close-up of a white board as Mr. Przedwiecki works through sample problems.

They also showcase Mr. Przedwiecki's personality. To create a signature look, he wears the same red bowtie in each video. It is a gift from a previous student. A paper cut-out character called "Mr. Phys" makes appearances throughout the course of the year to reinforce concepts. Even the logo for the course plays an important role. It is a simple graph consisting of 144 blank squares. For each lesson, one square is filled in. As more squares are filled in throughout the year, students are provided a graphical representation of their progress.

Mr. Przedwiecki is excited about the utility of his creation, even beyond his own classroom. He has subscribers to his YouTube channel from across the world, and he has received feedback from at least one college student who used the material while taking a physics class. He hopes that it will be a useful tool for other teachers, school districts, tutors, and even parents. As such, he highlights the importance of adequate broadband access that will allow any student to use systems like *A Gross of Physics*.

The results are encouraging. At the end of the 2013-2014 school year, Mr. Przedwiecki was pleased to see a dramatic 17 percentage point increase in the Regents passing rate for his classes. Even so, he is cautious in declaring it a full victory. He is withholding his final verdict until he sees results in upcoming years.

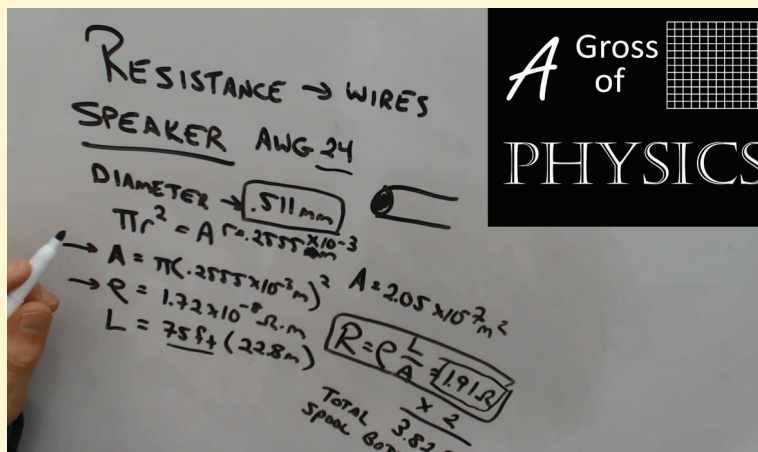
The results may be particularly relevant to discussions occurring statewide about flipped classrooms and virtual learning environments. These teaching methods may play an important role in classrooms across the state, and especially in rural school districts.

Mr. Przedwiecki views *A Gross of Physics* as a work in progress. This past summer, he published an accompanying notebook, and he plans to create a workbook with sample problems. He is adamant about staying on the cutting edge and continuing to improve the system.

It is a philosophy that Mr. Przedwiecki imparts to his students in *A Gross of Physics*. With a knowing smile and a nearly imperceptible wink, he reveals a secret about his program: there is no set lesson for Day 144.

It is a symbol for his students that the process has only begun. There is always more to learn.

For more information about Mr. Przedwiecki's teaching method, please visit his website at www.agrossofphysics.com



Screenshot of Mr. Robert Przedwiecki using a whiteboard to demonstrate a sample problem in one of his videos. (Courtesy of Mr. Robert Przedwiecki.)

“Every Day is Tuesday”

Transporting Milk from the Farm

On an afternoon in late September, Mr. David Masi was at a dairy farm in Danube, New York, a small town in Herkimer County. He stood inside the milk house near a pair of gleaming stainless steel bulk milk tanks, closely monitoring the process as milk flowed through a hose he carefully connected to one of the tanks. While Mr. Masi described his role, milk was pumped into the trailer of a milk truck parked just outside the building.

It was just one of many stops Mr. Masi made during the day, picking up milk at a number of dairy farms as a driver for Richard Obreza Trucking, Inc. When he completed his pickups, he delivered the milk to an Italian cheese company in Schenectady, New York.

While this particular event took place on a sunny Tuesday afternoon, the same process takes place regardless of weather – in blowing snow, plunging temperatures, or torrential rain. It happens on weekends and holidays. It is a business that operates seven days a week, 365 days a year.



The first truck used by Richard Obreza Trucking, Inc. to haul milk. (Photo courtesy of Richard Obreza Trucking, Inc.)

“The cows don’t know when it’s Christmas,” said Mr. Matthew Obreza, Vice President of Richard Obreza Trucking. It is a favorite phrase of his father, Mr. Richard Obreza, who founded the family-owned company in 1971. “Every day is Tuesday” is another apt description often used by his father. With cows being milked two or three times daily, farms require frequent pickups to ensure their product is delivered to processing facilities safely and efficiently.

What started with one small truck grew significantly over the years. Located in Mohawk, New York, the company now maintains a fleet of three dozen trucks and trailers, and it is focused exclusively on dairy transportation.

Over the course of two days, they pick up milk at 185 different farms in ten counties across Upstate New York. Each day they transport approximately 1.3 million pounds of milk to dairy plants in New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts for bottling or to produce other dairy products including yogurt, cheese, and ice cream.

The process begins with drivers visiting a wide range of dairy farms. Each trailer holds about 67,000 lbs of milk, and it takes stops at multiple farms to fill each trailer. Depending on the size of each farm, it may require visits to only a handful of farms, or to more than a dozen. The farms serviced by the trucking company range from small family farms with only 20 cows, to larger farms with more than 2,000 cows.

All farm pickup drivers are required to obtain a “Milk Receiver Samplers License” through the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. This license authorizes drivers to collect and transport milk, and it also requires drivers to collect and preserve samples of the milk for quality and safety testing.

Before pumping any milk into the trailer, several quality checks are performed. The driver turns off the bulk tank agitator and uses a measuring stick to determine how much milk is in the bulk tank. Temperature checks verify that the milk is stored within an appropriate temperature range to prevent bacteria growth. After turning the tank agitator back on to ensure the milk is fully mixed, the driver takes a small sample from the bulk tank. The sample is safely sealed in a small plastic vial and placed in a separate temperature-controlled container in the trailer. With the data and samples collected, the driver can pump the milk from the bulk tank into an insulated compartment in the trailer. Each trailer contains two cylindrical compartments.

When the truck gets back to the trucking company's facility, the individual samples are placed in a refrigerator. The farms' cooperative or milk marketing agency periodically picks up the samples to conduct quality tests on the milk that was collected. The better the test result, the better the farmer is paid.

After completing the scheduled farm pickups, the milk is delivered to a wide range of processing plants. Just a few years ago, most deliveries took place downstate, especially in Long Island. However, more of the deliveries are now going to upstate plants, due to the increasing demand for yogurt and the establishment of more processing facilities in Upstate New York.

Of course, cleaning the trailers is crucial to ensuring the safety and quality of milk being transported. After the milk is delivered, the trailer compartments and associated equipment are cleaned in place and sealed, before leaving the plant. The trailer is returned to the trucking facility, and the process begins again.

Richard Obreza Trucking is located on a quiet road just off Route 5S. A single building stands in the middle of a parking lot where trucks and trailers are neatly lined up, ready to make their pickups and deliveries. It is a building that has expanded as the company has grown. Mechanics conduct preventative maintenance and repair trucks in an indoor maintenance area. Other tractor-trailers receive a scrub-down in an attached wash bay, keeping them bright and shiny. A third bay stores rows of new winter tires, ready for installation to keep drivers safe on New York's icy and snowy roads. Day-to-day operations and dispatching duties are managed in attached office spaces.



Mr. Matthew Obreza, Vice President of Richard Obreza Trucking, Inc., stands next to one of the company's trucks.

The company also strives to stay on the leading edge of technology. They were the first in New York State to run trucks with twin turbo engines. They have conducted tests for tire companies, and they experimented with electronic handheld devices to track pickups and deliveries. They are currently testing a new design for a trailer.

The milk hauling industry has experienced significant changes in recent years. For example, the number of small dairy farms has decreased dramatically as they have been sold, often to larger farms. Milk haulers have to quickly adapt to an increasing number of changes. Delivery and pickup windows have narrowed. Diesel fuel costs are unpredictable. Changing regulations, such as engine emission standards, hours of service, and bridge restrictions, pose additional burdens. Registration costs and Thruway or bridge tolls continue to trend upward.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for the company is finding drivers willing and able to take on the role. Drivers work about 60 hours per week in a five or six-day workweek. Furthermore, milk must be picked up and delivered on weekends and holidays, not just Monday through Friday. Additionally, federal requirements mandate that drivers meet certain health requirements and undergo periodic physicals.

Still, nearly half of the employees have been with the company for more than 15 years. Turnover is minimal, and Mr. Obreza takes pride in the fact that the company provides vital jobs and income to more than 50 families in Central New York.

As Mr. Masi wraps up his farm pickup in Danube, it is clear that he loves his job. He has a farming background, and a job as a dairy truck driver is an ideal fit for him. It is also apparent that he is just the type of driver that Mr. Obreza wants to hire and retain, especially as it becomes more difficult to find someone with Mr. Masi's experience and availability.

"It's a job that needs to be done," says Mr. Masi. "You get to know some great people."

A Place to Call Home

How Student Housing Helps Rural Healthcare



Ms. Kelsey Talley, PA-C, is a certified physician assistant dedicated to providing quality healthcare in rural Allegany County. (Photo courtesy of Ms. Kelsey Talley, PA-C.)

Ms. Kelsey Talley, PA-C, is a certified physician assistant working at a small family medical practice in Andover, New York. She graduated from Daemen College in Amherst, New York, in May 2014, joining the practice shortly afterward in August.

While she is a new healthcare practitioner, she understands the need for healthcare providers in rural communities like Andover. She is passionate about providing top-notch healthcare services that meet the needs of her patients.

Yet, this is not the first time that Ms. Talley has worked in Andover. During her last year at Daemen College, she participated in ten clinical rotations. Two of those rotations were month-long stints at her current practice.

Ms. Talley can point to a number of reasons for returning to the area. Interestingly, one of those reasons relates to where she lived during her clinical rotations.

Western New York Rural Area Health Education Center (R-AHEC) works with a number of colleges to provide student housing for their health professions students. One of these locations is a house in Hornell, New York – not too far from Andover. R-AHEC has operated a housing location in Hornell since 2001, serving nearly 300 students.

There is nothing dramatic about the house, but it met an important need for Ms. Talley. She stayed in the house along with three other students. It provided her with the convenience she needed to get to know the local community and to thrive in her work environment.

“That house was literally a home away from home for me,” said Ms. Talley.

It is not the only student housing location provided by R-AHEC. The Thiel Hospitality House in Warsaw, New York, also offers housing for medical, physician assistant, and even veterinary students. Located adjacent to the Wyoming County Community Hospital, the Thiel House serves multiple purposes. In addition to student housing, it provides a place for people to stay when they have loved ones in the hospital. It can be especially important for families going through a medical crisis. The house also serves as a place for doctors to stay when they are on-call.



The Thiel Hospitality House in Warsaw, New York, provides a place for healthcare students to stay during their clinical rotations, as well as members of the public who have loved ones undergoing treatment at Wyoming County Community Hospital. (Photo courtesy of Western New York Rural Area Health Education Center.)

This type of student housing offered Ms. Talley the opportunity to better understand the local community. It is a connection that is vital to her success as a rural healthcare provider.

Understanding the challenges faced by rural residents helps her communicate better with her patients, and ultimately, provide better care. She understands the difficulties with transportation, access to specialists, and the financial challenges of rural life.

“We do a lot of things that a suburban office might not [have to] do,” said Ms. Talley. “You really have to know your patients.”

For Ms. Talley, it was a lesson begun during her stay at a home away from home.

Risk Management for the Dairy Farmer

By Dr. Andrew M. Novaković, Ph.D.

Red barns with silos, verdant fields, contented cows, men in denim overalls, and women in gingham dresses with aprons...there was a time when dairy farming conjured images like these. The iconic image of the dairy farm family was consistent with the impression that dairy farmers worked hard but enjoyed a good, albeit simple, life. While dairy farming made no promises of making farmers rich, its compensating virtue was that milking cows every day ensured a regular milk check and no great surprises in either production or price.

There are aspects of this pastoral painting that still characterize dairy farming today. The work is still unrelenting, but the risks are far greater. Big surprises in the milk check are not only no longer rare; they have become common, even quite predictable. The key to success on today's dairy farm is working smart, not working hard. The best managers have always had an advantage, but today it is essential to survival, not just an advantage.

The problem is not production risk, like a weather event for a crop farm. The dairy challenge is price risk, both for the price of milk and prices of inputs, especially feeds. Our notion of risk on dairy farms was elevated to a whole new level when the price of corn doubled, then tripled, in the wake of a federal policy to promote, even require, the use of corn-based ethanol in gasoline. In conjunction with the Great Recession, dairy farm profitability across the US plunged to depths not seen since the Great Depression and pushed many farms to the edge of bankruptcy. More than a few were pushed beyond that edge. This led Congress to include a brand new program and strategy for helping farmers through tough financial times.

Under the new Margin Protection Program for Dairy Producers, or MPP-Dairy, dairy farmers can purchase different levels of protection relative to a national indicator of dairy profitability, which is measured as the gross income from selling milk minus the cost of feeding their dairy herd. This new "margin insurance" seems to be attractively priced, but unlike previous price and income supports, farmers have to decide how much coverage they want and be prepared to pay for the privilege. The decision is not an easy one for dairy farmers who haven't had to think in those terms before. It is yet another example of the need to work smarter, not just harder. In New York, Cornell University is providing educational assistance, and other agricultural businesses, like lenders and marketing cooperatives, are helping as well. Nevertheless, each farm family will have to make their own choice.

At the moment we are just beginning to head into the downward part of the next revenue cycle. 2014 has been a fantastic year for dairy farmers. Next year will be decidedly tighter, but current signs suggest profitability won't be worse than average, thanks to much lower feed prices. Historical patterns suggest the next serious low spot may occur in 2016.

How well the new program helps farmers remains to be seen. Sign-up this fall has been slow. Some farmers will find they signed up for a level too low to give them any benefits in 2015. If 2015 is no worse than average that may be OK, but some farmers might be discouraged if they end up paying more for coverage than they received in benefits. That being said, when the next sign-up period begins in July 2015, it will be important to focus on looking to what will be helpful in 2016 and not get too bogged down in how well things worked in 2015.

Dairy farming and the associated dairy foods processing industry around it are among the best job creators in New York. A healthy and vibrant dairy industry is good for Rural New York. Maintaining it requires both working hard and working smart. In the increasingly complex markets of the 21st Century, a key part of working smart will require managing the unavoidable risks of the marketplace.

For more information about the new Margin Protection Program for Dairy Producers, please visit www.dairymarkets.org/MPP.



Dr. Andrew M. Novaković, Ph.D. is the E.V. Baker Professor of Agricultural Economics at Cornell University's Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management. He is a recognized expert on the dairy industry and agricultural economics. In his current role, Dr. Novaković is focused on applied research in dairy market economics and the development of educational programs for use by leaders, analysts, and policy makers within the dairy industry.

Finding Tucker



Tucker, happily reunited with his owner, Mr. James Oswald, is eager to begin another road trip. (Photo courtesy of Mr. James Oswald.)

It was a quiet morning in the offices of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources when an unlikely call came in. "I've got a really strange story for you," said the caller.

The caller was Mr. James Abbott, an animal control officer from Lancaster County, Virginia.

Mr. Abbott came across a small stray dog during the course of his day. It was not an unusual event, so he began the process of identifying the dog's owner. That includes checking the dog over, looking for a tag, scanning the animal for a microchip, or finding an identifying ear tattoo. This dog, though, had a tag stamped with a faded seven-digit number and "N.Y.S. AGR & MKTS ALBANY N.Y."

He knew it was a long shot, but he thought the number could be a phone number. After looking up the area code for Albany, he placed the call.

Of course, the number on the tag had not connected him with the dog's owner, or even the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (Ag & Markets). In what would prove to be an ironic twist, the mystery number led Mr. Abbott to call the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, of which Senator Catharine M. Young is Chair.

Over the next few hours, the hunt was on. Staff members from the Rural Resources office worked with other staff members from Senator Catharine Young's main office in Albany to try to identify the dog's owner. They reached out to Ag & Markets, who determined that the mystery number was in fact the tag number that correlated with their license records, and not a phone number. The tag number was part of a system that was no longer used. After digging through some old records, Ag & Markets located a name, Mr. James Oswald, and phone number associated with that tag number.

A phone call to Mr. Oswald went unanswered.

But Senator Young's staff refused to leave it there. A further search of the name resulted in contact information for a constituent of Senator Young. But there was no way to be sure it was the dog's owner.

A second phone call was placed. A second message was left.

This time, the call was returned, and the dog's owner was located.

So, in another strange twist, it turns out that the Oswald family, and their beloved dog Tucker, live within the district represented by Senator Young.

Mr. Oswald is a truck driver. His nine-year old dog serves as his loyal companion during his travels. Just that morning, Tucker had gotten lost during a quick stop in Virginia. Mr. Oswald actively searched for Tucker until he had to leave to pick up a shipment. He planned to resume the search afterward, but he was not optimistic.

Senator Young's staff connected Mr. Oswald with Mr. Abbott, and the two agreed to meet up.

Shortly afterward, Mr. Abbott knew that Tucker's owner had been located. When he opened the door to his vehicle, Tucker immediately jumped into Mr. Oswald's arms.

Since then, Tucker continues to serve as the loyal traveling companion, though with less wandering. "He's been sticking right close to me," said Mr. Oswald.

Check that Tag



Tucker's dog tag. For any dog owners with a similar tag, it is time to update your pet's registration. (Photo courtesy of Mr. James Oswald.)

The story of Tucker's reunification with his owner, (see page 10), came about through an unusual chain of events, and it serves as a reminder of the importance of keeping up with the current dog licensing system.

The tag found on Tucker is from an identification system no longer in use. The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (Ag & Markets) does not currently issue such tags, and the old files that contained Tucker's identification information are dated and rarely used.

In other words, Tucker was lucky that his identification information was still available at Ag & Markets.

Ag & Markets was tasked with issuing dog licenses and identification tags beginning in 1917, but the agency transferred that responsibility to local governments in 2010.

Therefore, it is essential that dog owners take a moment to check their dogs' tags, to ensure legibility, and to verify they do not indicate "N.Y.S. AGR & MKTS."

Any dog tag that references "N.Y.S. AGR & MKTS" needs to be replaced as quickly as possible, because the identification information may not be accurate or readily available. Dog owners now need to contact their local town, city, or county to complete the necessary license application in order to obtain a new identification tag and number.

In addition, advanced methods of identification, such as microchips, mean there are more ways than ever to ensure that lost pets are swiftly reunited with their families.

For more information about the changes in licensing procedures, please visit agriculture.ny.gov/AD/release.asp?ReleaseID=1912.



Time for Young Farmers to Apply

The "Young Farmers NY Initiative" was included in the 2014-15 State Budget. It consists of provisions designed to support the strong tradition of farming by helping young people begin a career in agriculture. Applications are currently being accepted for two of the programs in the initiative.

The Beginning Farmer Innovation Grant Fund encourages beginning farmers to bring their innovative ideas to fruition as they start-up and expand their farms in New York. It provides grants of up to \$50,000 to cover up to half the costs of a wide range of eligible projects. These include purchasing or leasing farm equipment, the cost of certain supplies, and the construction or expansion of farm buildings.

Applications are due by January 28, 2015. For more information, please visit esd.ny.gov/BusinessPrograms/NewFarmersGrantFund.html.

Bringing Agri-Business to High School

Western New York high school seniors who are interested in agriculture have an exciting new opportunity, thanks to a program created by Genesee Community College and the Genesee Valley Educational Partnership.

Called the Agri-Business Careers Academy, the program offers four agricultural and business-related courses to high school seniors from districts in Genesee, Livingston, Wyoming, and Steuben counties. Students taking the courses earn up to 12 State University of New York college credits. These credits can be transferred when the students attend college, where they will learn more about agri-business and finance.



The courses offered include “Western New York Agriculture,” which focuses on the diversity of agriculture in Western New York, its economic impact, and the changes that will be necessary to meet future challenges. The course relies heavily on field trips and takes students to farms for hands-on experience. Students also take courses including “Career and Educational Planning,” “Public Speaking,” and “Principles of Business.”

Academy graduates are able to transfer the skills they acquire in the program to their college educations and beyond. Those skills form the foundation of next-generation agribusinesses.

Students who attend the Agri-Business Academy are responsible for tuition fees, which are reduced to one third of Genesee Community College’s regular tuition rate.

For more information about the program, please visit www.genesee.edu/depts/ace/techprep/agriacademy.

Online Access Heading Up at Libraries

Average Download Speeds Slower for Rural Libraries

Nationwide, 98 percent of libraries provide free public access to Wi-Fi, according to the 2013 Digital Inclusion Survey.

That number is up from 89 percent in 2012.

The American Library Association, the International City/County Management Association, and the Information Policy and Access Center at the University of Maryland conducted the survey. The data for this survey was collected from public libraries during late 2013.



While the increase in access is an encouraging trend, download speeds in rural libraries lag behind those of libraries in cities. The average subscribed download speed in city libraries is greater than 100 Mbps. In rural libraries, that average drops to 21 Mbps. As many as one in five rural libraries offer download speeds of only 1.5 Mbps or slower.

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As a comparison, to download the 15 MB online version of *Rural Futures* would take only about one second at 100 Mbps, whereas the same download at 1.5 Mbps would take more than a minute. For larger files, the difference becomes even more dramatic.

Libraries play a critical role within their communities, and their services extend far beyond serving as a resource for literature. Libraries also help unemployed individuals fill out online employment applications, and they provide patrons with access to government forms as well as assistance in filling them out. Libraries also offer a wide range of after-school programs along with many other services.

Ensuring that libraries have sufficient broadband access and bandwidth is vital to these services. Closing the digital divide is imperative to helping rural and geographically isolated communities thrive in an increasingly digital economy.

More information about the survey can be found at digitalinclusion.umd.edu.

Promoting Local Food in WNY



Fresh, locally grown food is even more accessible in Western New York.

A local food guide called *From the Ground Up* debuted recently, showcasing the variety of wholesome, local foods available in Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua counties.

From the Ground Up is a project developed by the Southern Tier West Regional Planning & Development Board. It is designed to foster the relationship between consumers and local farmers. With increasing demand for fresh local food, this guide enables consumers to find healthy choices for every season while also growing the region's farming businesses.

The guide includes profiles of farm families and food producers in the region, giving readers a glimpse behind the scenes of roadside stands, farmers markets, or on-farm stores. There is also a seasonal harvest chart which shows when specific fruits and vegetables will be in season and readily available, as well as recipes for delicious meals and information on where to find some of the region's best local wine and beer products.

Work is currently underway to produce a second edition of *From the Ground Up*, which will include even more local farm and food producer listings, along with profiles, maps, and articles to further connect consumers with so many of the region's best farms and food producers.

For more information, please visit FreshLocalWNY.org.



An App for Wildlife

A hiker enjoys a walk through a wooded area in New York State when she sees an animal in the distance. She peers through her binoculars for a closer look, then reaches for another tool to help her identify the animal.

An angler looks for a new place to fish. A hunter wants to learn more about new regulations.

All three have access to a new tool: a smartphone application called “The Official New York Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Guide.”

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) developed the app, and it was launched earlier this year.

The app has a number of exciting features for sportsmen, including the locations of popular places to hunt and fish. It provides information on the best places to take in the incredibly diverse wildlife New York has to offer. Also included in the app’s features are species profiles, DEC rules and regulations, license and permit information, GPS mapping features, a real-time calendar of events, news and advisories, and an alert feature that provides the user’s GPS coordinates to designated personnel in the event of an emergency.

The GPS mapping features allow users to record trails and mark waypoints with photos. Users are also able to use the app’s “Nearest Me” feature to identify nearby wildlife resource management areas or public fishing areas.

The app is free to download, and can be found on the Apple App Store and the Google Play store, or by going to pocketranger.com.

Finding the Right Apple

Apple aficionados looking for that perfect bite among the many varieties of New York apples enjoyed another great crop this year, and they had a new resource available to help them in the search.

The New York Apple Association (NYAA) revamped their website to better connect consumers with the many orchards around the State. The website features locator maps which direct consumers to the orchards and farm markets closest to them. The site also includes a calendar of events, a nutrition section, and descriptions of dozens of apple varieties. There are even recipes for using apples including appetizers, drinks, and desserts.



Among the many choices are the two newest types of apples that were developed over the last decade by Cornell University’s apple breeding program. Bright red RubyFrost apples provide a blend of both sweet and tart flavors and feature a crisp texture. The SnapDragon variety gives consumers a satisfying crunch into a very sweet and juicy apple. Both varieties will see greater availability in the upcoming years.

Excellent growing conditions meant that 2014 resulted in another great season for New York State apples. According to the NYAA, the 2014 crop was estimated to be 30 million bushels, short of a record crop, but still well above the state’s five-year average.

Without a doubt, apple growers are hoping that 2015 will be another year with abundant sunlight and an ideal amount of rain, producing another award-winning crop of New York State apples.

For more information, please visit www.nyapplecountry.com.

Forestry at the Farm Show

The New York Farm Show annually attracts thousands of visitors to the State Fairgrounds to look at new equipment and to obtain the latest information on farming and overall land use.

Among the many exhibits is a booth for the New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA). The organization was founded in 1963 and focuses on supporting woodland owners and promoting long-term stewardship of forest resources.

NYFOA partners with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry to provide on-site experts, displays, and seminars at the Farm Show. They provide visitors with suggestions, advice, and fact sheets on enhancing and managing their woodland properties. Many visitors sign up for a free forest management plan from a DEC forester. Others schedule a visit from a Cornell-trained “Master Forest Owner” volunteer.



Mr. Gary Goff, a retired faculty member from Cornell University’s Department of Natural Resources, instructs a group of landowners as part of a Master Forest Owner course. While this particular session took place outdoors, the seminars at the New York Farm Show will be indoors. (Photo courtesy of the New York Forest Owners Association and Cornell Cooperative Extension.)

During the upcoming Farm Show, which will take place from February 26-28, 2015, NYFOA will once again host a wide range of “Learn More/Earn More” seminars in the Art and Home Center building. The seminars are free, and speakers provide time for questions. NYFOA expects to cover topics including insects and diseases in woodlots, the characteristics of successful timber sales, financial help for forest owners, enhancing wildlife, and much more.

For more information, please visit nyfoa.org.

Check out these Grants

Agricultural Safety and Health Council of America (ASHCA) Safety Grants Program

ASHCA is accepting applications for grants up to \$10,000 that will be used to support health and safety initiatives for farmers, ranchers, and agricultural workers. Applicants must be directly involved with agricultural production, education, training, or research. Applications for this program are due by January 7, 2015. For a complete list of the program requirements, please visit ashca.org/safety-grants-program.




New York State Clean Air School Bus Program

The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) is accepting applications for the New York State Clean Air School Bus Program, Round 3. The program provides project grants to retrofit school buses with certified emission-reducing technologies or to support the purchase of an alternative fuel bus. Applicants can include school districts, municipalities, private contractors, state agencies, and public authorities. Applications for this program are due by December 30, 2014. For more information, please visit nyserdera.ny.gov, and search for “PON 1896.”


SAVE THE DATES!




 **New York State Agricultural Society – Annual Forum
“Diversification for Success: Strategically Positioning
You and Your Business for the Future”**

January 8, 2015

Holiday Inn Liverpool/Syracuse, NY
nysagsociety.org

 **New York State
Association of Counties
2015 Legislative Conference
February 2-4, 2015**

The Desmond Hotel and Conference Center
Albany, NY
nysac.org

 **NY FarmNet Farm Business Transfer Conference
“Who Will Manage Your Farm Tomorrow”
January 13-14, 2015**

Doubletree Hotel, East Syracuse, NY
nyfarmnet.org

 **New York Farm Show
February 26-28, 2015**

New York State Fairgrounds
Syracuse, NY
newyorkfarmshow.com

**If you have any suggestions for upcoming editions,
Please email the Commission at RURALRES@NYSENATE.GOV**