

Rhode Island

Spring / Summer 2006

Ag-Review

RI. Ag-Review is a publication of the RIDEM/Division of Agriculture, 235 Promenade St. Prov., RI 02908, 401-222-2781

The Division of Agriculture, RIDEM and partners will celebrate Rhode Island Agricultural Day at the State House on May 17th. The event will feature displays and exhibits in the State House Rotunda, and a speaking ceremony in the State Room in the afternoon with the Governor, the Directors of DEM and the Economic Development Corporation, farmers and legislators. We hold this event each year to recognize the value and contributions of agriculture to the Rhode Island economy, quality of life and local foods.

Rhode Island agriculture continues to rise in profile and significance as recognition increases the value of family farms, local farm products, and open space to healthy communities, and collaborative RI farm viability efforts continue to build momentum. RI Agricultural Day 2006 will feature the official rollout of the RI Farmways agritourism campaign, the local beef marketing cooperative, the sheep cooperative wool blanket project, quahog shellfish branding program, aquaculture, the green industry, efforts to connect local farms to schools and restaurants, agency technical assistance and support efforts etc. The Diversity of Rhode Island agriculture will be on display throughout the State House Rotunda.

Look for Rhody Fresh Milk, Little Rhody Egg Farms, Confreda Greenhouses and Farms in Cranston, Cabot Cheese made from Rhode Island Dairy Farmers milk, Rhode Island State Grange, Kenyon's Corn Meal and Johnnycakes, Future Farmers of America, Rhode Island Beekeepers Association, SVF Foundation, Southside Community Land Trust, Rhode Island Conservation Districts, Rhode Island Rural Development, Dave's Marketplace, Rhode Island Farm Bureau, Farm Fresh RI, URI, RI Center for Agricultural Promotion and

Rhode Island Ag-Day set for May 17th

the Rhode Island Master Gardeners.

Look for the DEM/ RI Division of Agriculture display table at the Statehouse and please remember our logo "Rhode Island Grown Take Some Home".

Come join us for the Annual RI Ag-Day celebration at the State house on May 17th between the hours of 11:30 am and 5:00 pm. Many of the states farm groups will be represented, displaying their products with some sampling. Help us to support your industry by attending this annual event. For more information contact Ron Newman at 401-222-2781 x 4518 or by email at ron.newman@dem.ri.gov

DEM FARMERS' MARKETS 2006 SEASON TO BEGIN

The four farmers' markets, sponsored by the Department of Environmental Management will open the first week in May. Colt State Park in Bristol and Goddard Park in Warwick will open the first Friday in May. Fisherman's Memorial State Park



Narragansett will open on the first Sunday in May. Haines Memorial Park will open the first Wednesday in May. Last year we opened the Capitol Hill Farmers Market at one Capitol Hill and it will open on Thursday July 27 this year. The farmers' market program has been a great success for area farmers and local

residents. Once again this year the farmers markets will be accepting WIC Farmers Market Coupons and Senior Farmers Market Coupons. These coupons are also accepted at the private ly run farmers markets and roadside stands located throughout the state.

This year the DEM/Division of Agriculture plans to open two new farmers markets in partnership with the Department of Labor and Training, Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals, Department of Health and the DEM/Division of Parks. One will be open at the Pastore Complex in Cranston. This market will open on Friday July 21. Hours will be 10 am to 2:30 pm. This farmers market will serve over 4000 State Employees that work in the area and area residents. The other farmers market will be located at the Blackstone River State Park Visitor Center on 295 North in Lincoln. This farmers market is scheduled to open on Tuesday, July 25. Hours for the market are 2 pm to 6 pm.

The RI Ag-Review is a publication of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management Division of Agriculture and is published two times per year. All correspondence should be directed to The RI Division of Agriculture 235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI 02908
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The DEM/Division of Agriculture Farmers Market Program has become so successful that it is estimated it adds over \$500,000.00 of income to the Rhode Island economy at the seven DEM/Farmers. This figure does not take into account the added sales generated at farm stands due to customer and vendor relationships that developed at these farmers markets.

If you are considering participating at any of the state run farmer markets, now is a good time to give us a call at 222-2781 x 4517 ask for Pete Susi or contact him via email at peter.susi@dem.ri.gov

FYI

Farm to School

From the Farm to School Subcommittee
City kids dig fresh carrots!

What kid doesn't love crispy, crunchy, sun-sweetened, just-picked fruits and veggies?! They all do! The problem is not convincing kids to eat these foods but rather figuring out a way to put these healthier food options within reach. Luckily, food grown by nearby farms (both in and around the city) offer that unbeatable flavor and freshness. Knowing this, our Farm to School subcommittee is set to work to connect farms and schools in the Providence Region.

Healthy communities and local family farms go hand-in-hand!

Linking farms and schools is a great idea. Not only is the food fresher (which translates into kids eating more healthfully) but connecting city kids with the open space that surrounds them (both in the city and on the outskirts) is the simplest form of environmental education.

Tomorrow's citizens need to know what fertile soil and open space means to them. They need to know where food comes from.

The idea needs to grow!

Over this past year, our Farm to School Subcommittee has brought together the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management/Division of Agriculture, the Rhode Island Department of Health, Southside Community Land Trust, Kids First, and Farm Fresh Rhode Island to collaborate around this goal. We have searched for funding for a state-wide Farm to School coordinator and have raised \$12,000 so far. We set a goal of having every school district in Rhode Island (36!) make at least one local purchase by Fall 2007. We assisted in the planning of a local school district corn-shucking event in September 2005, which attracted lots of media attention and the attention of our state leaders. We helped with introducing legislation that offers a financial incentive to businesses for purchasing RI-grown foods. We have revised the RI Healthy Schools Coalition *Model Policy Language for School District Nutrition* to include Farm-to-School language and have included Farm-to-School materials in RI Department of Health toolkits for RI school district's Wellness Subcommittees. We hosted a "Local Food Forum" to bring school food service directors together with farmers and attracted over a hundred participants including our State's Directors of Health and Environmental Management. We networked with colleagues across the Northeast. We advocated for a USDA Free Fruit and Vegetable Program in Rhode Island. We initiated a "Happy Apple Award" for schools who successfully connect with local farmers.

And this is just the beginning...

Plant Industry News

Matt Green
Nursery and Organic Programs

We look forward to another productive season assisting nursery stock growers and dealers and organic farmers and handlers through the nursery and organic certification programs. The programs cooperate with growers and dealers to protect and promote the quality and rich diversity of nursery stock and organic agricultural products produced and marketed in Rhode Island.

The Nursery program continues to see increasing numbers of both nurseries and dealers. At the start of this season, the number of licenses issued to nurseries and nursery stock dealers had grown to a total of 87 nurseries certified by inspection of over 1,900 acres of nursery stock, and 183 nursery stock dealer locations. Licensed nurseries are granted certification after an annual inspection of their nursery stock. Other inspections and certifications conducted for nursery stock include phytosanitary certification for interstate and international exports, and post-entry quarantine of international imports. The Rhode Island Nursery Law and lists of certified nurseries and licensed nursery stock dealers be found on the Division web page at: <http://www.dem.ri.gov/topics/agricult.htm>

The Rhode Island organic certification program began certifying organic farms in 1990 and is accredited by the USDA National Organic Program as a certifier of organic crops producers and handlers. Through this program qualified organic operators are certified as growing and handling/processing produce and products according to the National Organic Standards. Currently 19 organic farms and 1 organic handler are certified organic by the Division according to the Standards. Organic food is produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil, water and wildlife to enhance environmental quality for future generations. Organic farming is done without using most conventional pesticides, fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge, bioengineering or ionizing radiation. Organic farmers provide Rhode Islanders with a fresh, local supply of healthy farm products through a variety of outlets including wholesale and retail outlets, farm stands, farmers markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).

Information on certification and a list of certified organic and transitional farms and handlers as well as CSAs (includes some conventional farms) can be found on the RI Organic Certification Program web page at: <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/agricult/orgcert.htm>

Attention Logo Users

Logo items are ready for the 2006 season. If you need bags, price cards, labels or tags call Pete Susi at 222-2781 x 4517 or at peter.susi@dem.ri.gov

Animal Health News

Avian Influenza A Threat to the Poultry Industry

Avian Influenza Around the World

Avian Influenza (AI) is found around the world in several different forms. There are many different strains of this virus that can cause varying amounts of clinical illness in poultry. AI viruses can infect chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, ducks, geese, and guinea fowl, as well as exotic and wild birds. Migratory waterfowl are considered a natural reservoir for Avian Influenza viruses. There is no immediate human health risk from Avian Influenza. Poultry products, chicken and eggs are safe to eat when properly prepared.

AI occurs in two forms, based on the severity of disease. Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI) is the most common form and typically causes mild clinical signs in infected birds. Some strains of LPAI can undergo genetic mutation under field conditions and convert to the severe form of High Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). HPAI is extremely infectious and a highly fatal disease in poultry flocks. Rarely, isolated strains of high pathogenic virus can cause illness in humans. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and state animal health officials are working constantly to prevent HPAI outbreaks in Americas poultry industry. Outbreaks of AI can result in national and international bans on poultry products. The economic impact can be devastating, resulting in the loss of millions of dollars in trade, increased egg prices and the death of millions of birds.

Avian Influenza can develop rapidly in poultry operations, without any warning or noticeable symptoms. Once established, an outbreak can spread rapidly from farm to farm. The poultry industry is constantly monitored for AI and reporting of any disease is essential in order to control the spread of the virus. Testing for this disease is often required to import and export birds.

Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza and Rhode Island

In recent years LPAI has been occasionally detected in live bird markets and small flocks in New England. The most recent outbreak of LPAI occurred in Virginia during the summer of 2002, affecting 4.7 million birds. In February of 2003, LPAI was reported in a large commercial layer flock in Eastern Connecticut. State and Federal officials responded by instituting strict quarantine and surveillance procedures in order to contain the disease and identify infected flocks. In April 2003, Rhode Island discovered LPAI infected birds within one commercial egg operation and one live bird market, and implemented protocols to prevent the disease from infecting other commercial and private flocks. The live bird market was thoroughly disinfected

and remains free of LPAI, under constant monitoring by state officials. The egg layer operation was depopulated and remains under strict biosecurity with regular testing in place. There have been no other cases of avian influenza reported and Animal Health staff continues to routinely test all sick birds and commercial flocks in the state. Although the potential for LPAI to mutate into the severe high pathogenic form is extremely low, identification and quarantine of AI infected birds is essential in order to prevent the virus from establishing itself and multiplying. State and federal law mandates the reporting of all Avian Influenza cases and permitting of all poultry entering the state.

Rhode Island has approximately 100,000 birds in production and 30,000 birds in so called "backyard" flocks, which includes farms with less than 500 birds and individual residences with poultry raised for fairs, shows and exhibition. Commercial production facilities are at the highest risk for disease due to the large numbers of birds in confined areas and movement of potentially contaminated vehicles and materials between farms. Backyard flocks and small farms can be infected, especially when they have contact with wild birds and materials from commercial operations.

Clinical Signs of Avian Influenza in Poultry

Infected birds may exhibit no obvious signs of disease. Typically bird owners will notice one or more of the following symptoms, in no specific order:

- Sudden death with no clinical signs
- Lack of appetite
- Listlessness
- Drop in egg production
- Soft shelled and misshapen eggs
- Swelling of the head, comb, wattles, eyelids and legs
- Respiratory disease, sneezing, coughs, nasal discharge
- Neurological signs, in coordination
- Diarrhea

Bird owners should be alert and monitor flocks for any sign of illness. Veterinarians and Animal Health Officials should be contacted immediately when disease is suspected.

Preventing Avian Influenza-Biosecurity Measures on Farms

Avian Influenza can be spread rapidly, primarily through contact with infected birds, manure and contaminated vehicles and materials. Migrating waterfowl harboring the virus can expose domestic birds. Once introduced to a farm, AI moves easily among birds housed together. Mechanical transmission via contaminated manure, cages, feed, vehicles, egg crates and exposed humans represents the highest risk for spread of disease. Cohabitation and close proximity to wild birds and waterfowl are also known to cause outbreaks.

Avian Influenza virus can remain contagious for long periods in moist, moderate temperature

environments, such as dirt and manure. Frozen virus can survive indefinitely. Fortunately heat, drying and most types of disinfectants will destroy AI. Thorough cleaning and washing of exposed materials, followed by complete application of disinfectants is effective for decontamination. Poultry owners should always practice strict "Biosecurity" (protocols designed to prevent disease). Some recommendations for biosecurity are:

- Practice "all in-all out" management of birds, with cleaning between restocking.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect all equipment and vehicles before entering and leaving farms
- Maintain and isolate equipment on the farm, do not share materials or vehicles
- Restrict traffic on the property to essential movements and personnel
- Avoid contact with people who have been to other farms, minimize visitors
- Do not visit other farms unless clothing has been changed
- Provide signage, notices and security to alert visitors and restrict access to flocks.
- Provide proper clothing and disinfectants for all personnel
- Minimize exposure to migratory and native birds
- Follow strict protocols for permitting, health certification and isolation of new birds or eggs

Surveillance and Reporting of Avian Influenza

Rhode Island animal health officials routinely screen commercial poultry operations for Avian Influenza and other diseases. All reports of sick poultry and suspicious illness are investigated. Blood samples and viral cultures are collected from live and dead birds for testing at approved laboratories. Private veterinarians will examine birds and submit samples. All suspect cases in poultry must be reported immediately to the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Managements Division of Agriculture. Incidents concerning large numbers of ill or dead wild birds must be reported to the RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife. RIDEM has developed and implemented protocols for surveillance throughout the state and the reporting all results. Information and details about AI in poultry and wild birds is available at the addresses and websites listed below.

Rhode Island Department of Environment Management

Division of Agriculture, Animal Health Section
235 Promenade Street,
Providence, RI 02908
401-222-2781
401-222-6047 fax

Division of Fish and Wildlife
4808 Tower Hill Road
Wakefield, RI 02879
401-789-3094
401-783-4460 fax

USDA-Animal Plant Health Inspection Service
Veterinary Services – New England Area
160 Worcester-Providence Rd.
Sutton, Massachusetts, 01590
505-865-1421

Resources and Information

In addition to the above addresses, information and literature about Avian Influenza and biosecurity practices can be obtained on the Internet at:

- www.dem.state.ri.us RI Department of Environmental Management
- www.health.state.ri.us RI Department of Health
- www.usda.gov/birdflu Us Department of Agriculture
- www.cdc.gov Center for Disease control
- www.pandemicflu.gov White House Official Pandemic Flu site
- www.scwds.org Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Survey
- www.usaha.org US Animal Health Association
- www.avam.org American Veterinary Medical Association
- www.who.int World Health Organization
- www.fao.int UN Food and Agriculture Organization
- www.oie.int World Animal Health Organization (OIE)
- www.doi.gov US Department of Interior

Pesticide News

Spring- Summer Schedule 2006

Training Requirements: In order to receive licenses/certifications, all applicants are required to attend the core training which consists of two days with an exam in the afternoon of the second day. Individuals that would like to become commercially certified are required to attend category training in their specialty area. Core Sessions are all identical training sessions. Attendance on both days is required before the examination can be taken. It is recommended that you attend one session in full, but substitutions can be arranged.

Preregistration is required - Call Margaret Siligato if you need confirmation.

CORE SCHEDULES

Core IV	Day 1	May 9	Tues / URI Kingston-East Farm	8am-4pm
	Day 2	May 18	Thurs / URI Kingston-East Farm	8am-4pm
Core V	Day 1	July 13	Thurs / URI Kingston-East Farm	8am-4pm
	Day 2	July 20	Thurs / URI Kingston-East Farm	8am-4pm

COMMERCIAL CATEGORY & IPM TRAINING SESSIONS:

These session fulfill the requirements for "RUP" certification and also qualifies for Integrated Pest Management Training.

Category 7B Termite	Tues May 2 / URI Kingston-East Farm	8am-4pm
Category 7E Mosquito	Thurs May 11/ URI Kingston-East Farm	8am-4pm
Category 8 Public Health	Thurs May 11/ URI Kingston-East Farm	8am-4pm
*Tick Recertification for Cat 7A, 8	Tues May 16/ URI Kingston-East Farm	8am-12pm

Information: Margaret Siligato at URI 874-5997 or Robin Mooney at DEM 222-2781 x 4513



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Visit us at www.dem.ri.gov

