



*We teach, learn, lead, and serve,
connecting people with the University of Wisconsin, and engaging with
them in transforming lives and communities.*

4-H – Positive Youth Development

Holly Luerssen, 4-H Program Educator

- A 6 day program at the Wisconsin Valley Fair where 4-H arts & crafts, foodie, wildlife ecology, and other STEM related activity stations were set up to engage fair attendees in a taste of Marathon County 4-H. Total Reach: Over the 6 day program 650 youth attended the stations.
 - The Discover 4-H Activity stations were set up in the Youth Expo Building and were offered three to four different times each day. During each session, the 4-H staff set up 3-4 different activities. The activities showcased different experiences in 4-H from Foodie to art to animal tracking to learning about chemical reactions in fizzy jars to Lego challenges and creating cards for the next Honor Flight program.
- A day camp for youth in 5k-3rd grade, where they learned about pollinators, wind energy and the power of water while attending the Children's Imaginarium during the morning. In the afternoon the youth engaged in designing cards for the Honor Flight program, creating art, and enjoying other summer camp games and activities. The day camp helped youth find their sparks, enhance relations, engage in service learning, and foster engagement in 4-H. Total Reach: 26 youth campers 3 older youth counselors 5 staff members
 - The annual Kids Day Camp provides the younger local youth with an opportunity to engage in a camp like atmosphere in a one day event. A day camp for youth in 5k-3rd grade, where they learned about pollinators, wind energy and the power of water while attending the Children's Imaginarium during the morning. In the afternoon the youth engaged in designing cards for the Honor Flight program, creating art, and enjoying other summer camp games and activities. The day camp helped youth find their sparks, enhance relations, engage in service learning, and foster engagement in 4-H. 97% of campers said they tried something new. 89% mentioned they met someone new. 100% of campers said they would like to come back to day camp.

Agriculture

Heather Schlessler, Dairy Agent

- A webinar, one session part of Badger Dairy Insight, for dairy farmers and dairy industry professionals, where participants learned about risks of feeding rations without adequate fiber levels and potential dry matter and nutrient losses during silage preservation. Total Reach: 72 registered attendees
 - Badger Dairy Insight is a monthly webinar offered to dairy farmers and dairy industry professionals around topics related to reproduction, nutrition, emerging technologies, and animal welfare to



increase their knowledge around the latest University research. Then nutrition workgroup provided speakers to talk about low fiber diets and losses occurring during silage preservation. Attendees and those watching the recording of the presentations will have knowledge on feeding fiber and silage preservation.

- A webinar, one session part of Badger Dairy Insight, for dairy farmers and dairy industry professionals, where participants learned about leveraging digital technologies to improve management decisions on dairy farms. Total Reach: 81 people registered for the webinar.
 - Badger Dairy Insight is a monthly webinar offered to dairy farmers and dairy industry professionals around topics related to reproduction, nutrition, emerging technologies, and animal welfare to increase their knowledge around the latest University research. The emerging technology workgroup collaborated with Dr. Joao Dorea an Assistant Professor in Precision Agriculture and Data Analytics to develop this Badger Dairy Insight presentation. Examples of Dr. Dorea's work include the use of digital technologies to monitor animal behavior, growth development, social interaction, and early detection diseases or animal welfare concerns. Attendees and those watching the recording of the presentations will have knowledge on emerging technology applications on dairy farms.
- Planning for an update to Topic Hub article heat abatement resources in dairy cattle, as well as, creating new informative videos to showcase dairy farmer success stories about heat abatement strategies on-farm. The goal is to increase awareness and highlight successful implementation of heat abatement strategies for dairy cattle. These resources will address a critical topic related to climate change and sustainability, as well as methods to ensure high quality animal care and economic viability for the dairy industry.
 - Heat stress presents both an animal welfare and sustainability challenge for the dairy industry. Dairy cattle of all ages are susceptible to thermal discomfort and may experience poor animal welfare as a result (Van Os et al., 2024). In lactating cows, milk production and reproductive losses have been documented to occur during heat stress, which, along with a greater risk for mortality, threatens the economic viability, efficiency, and environmental sustainability of dairy production. Some limited evidence also suggests heat stress and mitigation strategies impact public perception of dairy farming (Cardoso et al., 2018). Many Wisconsin dairy farmers have expressed interest in learning more about cost-effective and energy-efficient housing and management practices to mitigate heat stress in dairy cattle. Previous heat abatement resources on the Topic Hub will be updated and new resources will be added to address economic impact. In addition, brief, informative videos to highlight various types of successful heat abatement strategies implemented by dairy producers on-farm will be created. Our goal is to serve as a reliable source for research-based information on effective and efficient heat abatement strategies in continental or temperate climates, across dairy herd sizes and facility types. Dairy producers and the industry will increase awareness of heat abatement strategies and important sustainability, economic, and animal care implications.
- Planning for Planning Emergency Livestock Transportation Response (PELTR) hybrid workshops for and in collaboration with area and statewide emergency response personnel. The goal of PELTR is to maintain an effective emergency response that protects producer/livestock owners' and Wisconsin's agricultural economic viability. Total Reach: Workshops require pre-registration and are limited to 20 participants per location. Two locations are being planned for 40 emergency responders total.



- Livestock transportation is a critical segment of the food supply system and Wisconsin's agricultural industry. It is also a highly visible segment to the public with animals being transported to and from farms, points of sale, and to processing facilities. Safety on roadways is in everyone's best interest and part of that safety is preparedness for responding to emergencies on the roadway. First responders are the front line in that response and many lack experience with livestock handling. First responders, and livestock owners and associations, asked us to provide this training. UW- Madison Extension Livestock and Dairy Program colleagues created the research-based curriculum titled Planning for Emergency Livestock Transport Response (PELTR). The curriculum consists of five modules delivered virtually and in person through lectures, interactive discussions, videos, and demonstrations. Short-term outcome: increase emergency responders' preparedness to respond to roadside incidents involving transported livestock. Medium-term: responders share what they learned as they develop their local response plans. Long-term: Wisconsin's emergency responders have plans in place to respond to roadside incidents involving transported livestock.

FoodWise

Mallory McGivern, FoodWise Administrator

Michelle Van Krey, Healthy Communities Coordinator

Julia Perock, FoodWise Educator

- FoodWise staff from Marathon County and the surrounding Central Wisconsin Region are planning for the development of a Farmers Market Collaborative to bring market managers and key leaders in the region together and build a support system around markets in rural communities where resources and capacity is limited.
- A quarterly nutrition education series was taught in Marathon County for adults with young children as part of the Children's Wisconsin LEAP (Learning Essentials about Parenting) program where they learn about incorporating healthy eating habits into the family routine, including family meals and eating more fruits and vegetables. The goal of this effort is to encourage healthy eating behaviors at home.
- Nutrition Educator Julia Perock attended a Strongbodies teacher training hosted by UW Madison Division of Extension. Julia is now certified to teach the strength-training program designed for older adults.
- FoodWise staff attended the Wisconsin Valley Fair where the UW Madison Division of Extension had a booth in the Exhibition Building. FoodWise Educator Julia Perock brought a mystery box where youth and families could feel a vegetable and guess what was in the box. FoodWise also had resources and recipes for families.
- Shared leadership in the Marathon County Hunger Coalition, where emphasis is placed on expanding healthy food access and developing new projects and partnerships that will empower Marathon County families through education and shared resources. The coalition's goal is to increase access to healthy foods in order to achieve health equity for all county residents.





Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
MARATHON COUNTY

August 2024 Report

Horticulture

Janell Wehr, Horticulture Educator

- A diagnostic service for the general public, where Marathon and Wood County residents' horticultural inquiries are answered through evidence-based resources. This effort is designed to reduce pollution through horticultural product (pesticides and fertilizers) misuse.
- "Can you dig it?" newsletter for the general public, where subscribers can read timely articles specifically related to horticulture issues facing central Wisconsin. The goal of this effort is designed to increase awareness and knowledge of resources to decrease environmental contamination.

Natural Resources

Kris Tiles, NRI Program Manager

Anna James, Regional Natural Resources Educator

Jen McNelly, Regional Natural Resources Groundwater Educator

- A field day for farmers and non-farmers in and around the Big Roche-A-Cri watershed, where attendees learned about an on-farm research project that was conducted by Farmers of the Roche-A-Cri and Petenwell & Castle Rock Stewards group members and Extension and UW-Madison researchers. Through this field day, attendees learned about the dynamics of nitrate leaching and examined the feasibility and impact of interseeding cover crops in a potato system. Attendees also learned ways in which on-farm research trials will help potato growers improve their practices to minimize nitrate losses. Total Reach: 25 attendees including agency staff, non-farming community members, producers, and agronomists
- A facilitated discussion with Farmers of the Roche-A-Cri, a producer-led watershed protection group, where the group discussed new collaboration opportunities and educational programming efforts. Through this discussion, group members identified priority areas for education programming and research that will serve the community and natural resources needs of the Big Roche-A-Cri and Little Roche-A-Cri watersheds. Total Reach: 8 producer-led group members
- A presentation for county and state partners, where the audience learned about producer-led watershed protection group in Central Wisconsin and the value of utilizing social science efforts in conservation management. Through this effort, county and state partners explored ways to collaborate with producer-led watershed protection groups to help improve water quality, and discussed ways in which social science efforts can be utilized to inform and measure progress of watershed management plans. Total Reach: Estimated 40 attendees that include county Land & Water staff and DNR staff
- A presentation for attendees of the 2024 National Wildlife Federation Growing Outreach Conference, where attendees learned about a social indicator survey that was conducted to better understand producer's awareness levels, attitudes, constraints, capacity and behavior towards water quality and conservation practices. The goal of this effort was to inform attendees about ways social science efforts can be incorporated into watershed management planning. Another goal of this effort was to inform attendees about planning, implementing, and evaluation conservation practices based on the needs of stakeholders within a watershed. Total Reach: Approximately 70 attendees



- A project for Wisconsin woodland owners where they will work with a forester to get a Forest Stewardship Plan. Through this program, woodland owners will receive a plan that will allow them to identify goals for their property, plan for the future of their land, and implement management activities. Total Reach: 28 Cooperating Foresters have joined the project to write Forest Stewardship Plan 40 Woodland Owners have been connected with Forester to get a plan 1 Forest Stewardship Plan completed
 - Wisconsin has made great strides in private forest landowner engagement, more than 21,000 new landowners have received a property visit from a professional forester since 2018. These landowners have received personalized information about their property and are poised to act in their woods. The cost of getting a Forest Stewardship Plan can be prohibitive for some woodland owners, but those same plans are commonly required to participate in cost-share programs that help pay for woodland management activities. We created the Wisconsin Stewardship Plan Project (WSPP) to help Wisconsin landowners take the next step by making it possible for them to get a Forest Stewardship plan for their woodlands. WSPP created a network of private foresters that will write plans across the state. The Wisconsin DNR received a grant so that the project could pay the private foresters for the plans they write. When an eligible woodland owner signs up, the project will connect them with a private forester that can write a Stewardship Plan in their area. The woodland owner works with the private forester to identify goals for their woodlands and strategies to reach goals, and the process ends with the landowner having a Forest Stewardship Plan. Targeted outreach to woodland owners that have done a walkthrough with their DNR forester, but do not have a management plan, is planned for the future to help the project continue to grow. Outreach will include emailing information about the program and/or a mailing. We will also connect with partner organizations to help us proliferate information about the project in their network. The Wisconsin Stewardship Plan Project will increase the number of landowners who have a Forest Stewardship Plan for their property. Further this will increase the number of woodland owners that have the required management plan to apply for cost share programs that can financially help with management activities. Our project removes the financial barrier of getting a Forest Stewardship Plan for some landowner's by using grant funding to pay for the plans. UW Extension Forestry will continue to engage and provide resources for woodland owners after they get a Forest Stewardship Plan so participants feel better prepared to implement their plan. The project is also employing private foresters across the state by providing plan writing opportunities. The hope is that culmination of this effort will increase forest health across the state.

Additional Extension Outreach Programming Occurring in Marathon County

- Planning for a Pasture Walk. The goal is to reach dairy producers that graze, other livestock grazers and a focus on organic grazing so that they will gain skill and confidence in utilizing grazing on their farms.
- A two-day event where livestock producers learned about effective pasture management in order to maximize productivity and increase profits.



- Planning for a Fall workshop focused on Entrepreneurship and Placemaking efforts in Marathon, Portage, and Wood Counties. The goal, under the Strategic Doing framework, is to bring together stakeholders from across the region in order to establish action-based work groups to support, enhance, and grow efforts towards placemaking and an entrepreneurial ecosystem within the region.
- A study to better understand water quality concerns for foreign-born farm workers. Results will inform participants of water safety concerns and provide education for remedying water quality concerns. Total Reach: 119 farms were contacted for participation. Testing is still being conducted.

Upcoming Programs

- **4-H Programming** – Information at marathon.extension.wisc.edu/projects/programs/
- **Horticultural Programs** – Information at <https://marathon.extension.wisc.edu/horticulture/programs/>

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