



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
MARATHON COUNTY

September 2024 Report

*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 5 day camp for youth, where they participated in theater performance. Through this activity youth learn the art of theater through auditions, rehearsals, character development, and performance. On day 5 the youth gave a performance to the community at a local theater. Total Reach: 17 youth actors from 13 families, 125 people attended the performance
 - We engaged in this program to address both the gap in creative arts opportunities and the critical need for spaces where youth can feel included, connected, and supported in discovering their passions. The 4-H Youth Theater Program, in partnership with Missoula Children's Theater, was designed to meet these needs by offering a unique platform for youth to explore their "sparks" through performance, teamwork, and leadership. It also provides a space where they can feel a sense of belonging, particularly important for youth who may not have access to other positive outlets for expression. Through the Youth Theater Camp, 18 youth met daily to learn about theater performance. Two professional actors from Missoula Children's Theater program were the group leaders. Our Marathon County 4-H staff assisted with program activities, running lines with actors, encouraging theater development, and general program support. Evaluation of the program by youth and their adults showed the high impact this program had on youth. 95% of youth met someone new. 100% of the youth felt welcomed by the group. One youth commented that they hope to participate in future theater programs. A parent commented that this program really helped their child grow their stage presence while they connect with other youth and adults.
- 2024-25 4-H Enrollment is currently open to all youth in 5K through one year past high school. Members will enroll with one of 28 local community clubs to build on their 'sparks' and deepen their connections with other youth. Adult volunteers also join Marathon County 4-H to become a mentor to youth. To learn more about joining Marathon County 4-H go to <https://marathon.extension.wisc.edu/4h/4honline-enrollment> or call our office 715-261-1231.





Agriculture

Heather Schlessner, Dairy Agent

Melissa Ohlrich, Regional Crops Educator

- Securing funding for workshops where dairy and livestock will increase their awareness and knowledge of biosecurity practices to prevent and mitigate the economic impact of endemic and foreign animal diseases (especially Foot and Mouth Disease, FMD) for their farms.
- An event for farm owners and workers, where they learned about proper shot placement, restraint of calves for jugular blood draw, and how to use a refractometer to decrease injection site lesions resulting in lost meat, and to increase calf care practices which result in decreased incidence of sickness.
 - Animal welfare and wellbeing is a topic that is very important to consumers. Over recent years consumers have become increasingly concerned with where their food comes from and how the animals are treated. Healthy animals don't just happen; they take time and care. One step to keeping animals healthy involves vaccinating them to protect against disease. Proper vaccine handling is important to accomplish good protection against disease. The training of farm personnel has positive impacts on animal welfare and performance, thus increasing the overall farm profitability. To support dairy farms and their employees, the "Veterinary Care: Safe IM-SQ-IV Techniques" hands-on program was developed. This program aims to teach producers and their employees how to properly administer injections in cattle, their proper placement, and how to restrain calves for jugular blood draw and how to read a refractometer to determine the successful transfer of passive immunity. Class participants were asked to rate their change in knowledge utilizing a self-reported pre/post evaluation. Participants indicated a 0.67-point change in knowledge on a 5-point Likert scale. Participants were also asked to report their level of comfort giving Intravenous, Intramuscular, and sub-Q injections as a result of attending this workshop. Participants indicated an overall change in comfort of 0.34 on a 5 - 5-point Lickert scale, with the greatest change (0.43) in Intravenous injections.
- Planning to coordinate Extension educators statewide to ensure uniform data collection related to corn silage harvest management. The goal is to share whole plant moisture with forage growers in each region and aggregate additional silage data including planting date, relative maturity, corn hybrid, fungicide use, grain stage and previous crop. This data would be utilized to inform future corn silage harvest recommendations.
 - Corn silage dry down events are held across the state as means to determine when optimum corn silage harvest should occur due to whole plant moisture measurements. As we are already gathering some data regarding the samples collected, we determined there is additional information that would be beneficial to better understand the factors affecting when corn silage should be harvested. This prompted the forage team in the crops and soils program to look further to determine what data might be beneficial to informing harvest management decisions. A number of resources were prepared for educators and partners to utilize when gathering data at local corn silage dry down events. Partners will be provided with a worksheet for producers to fill out and return with their stalk



samples. Additionally, an Excel document is available to collect that data as well. Data will be collected and used to inform future management recommendations.

- 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.

FoodWise

Mallory McGivern, FoodWise Administrator

Michelle Van Krey, Healthy Communities Coordinator

Julia Perock, FoodWise Educator

- A nutrition education series in partnership with WIC for families participating in WIC programming. These classes are taught at The Neighbors' Place community room and feature foods provided through the WIC nutrition program and foods typically found in The Market at The Neighbors' Place.
- An ADRC grant provided funding for weights to reach western Marathon County with GenteFuerte (StrongBodies) programming. StrongBodies is a strength training program for older adults that improves flexibility, strength and community connection.
- 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.

- 9% of Marathon County residents use SNAP benefits to purchase food, and many more would benefit from increased access to fresh fruits and vegetables. FoodWise provides support to the MCHC, which purchases and procures local produce for food pantries and operates a monthly mobile pantry that travels throughout the county. The MCHC purchases thousands of dollars of produce and local food from farmers in the community to be distributed through food pantries. This program supports the local economy by keeping money in the community and provides healthy food to those that need it most.

Horticulture

Janell Wehr, Horticulture Educator

- A booth at the Central Wisconsin State Fair where the general public participated in an active learning game about blossom end rot. The effort was designed to increase awareness and knowledge of resources to decrease environmental contamination and pollution due to overuse of horticulture chemicals.
- A presentation for the general public at MCPL-Wausau where participants learned about Spotted Lantern Fly (SLF), including methods to scout and report. The goal of this effort is to increase awareness and knowledge of resources to address environmental contamination and pollution due to overuse of horticulture chemicals in urban and suburban environments.
- Respondents stated as a result of the program they: Understood WHY SLF could become an emergent issue for Wisconsin gardeners: 100% Understood how SLF spreads into new territories; 100% Understood the methods to detect SLF; 67% Understood how to report: 100%
- A presentation for adults over 55 (Woodson YMCA-The Landing) where participants learned how evidence-based gardening practices can mitigate the effects of extreme weather due to climate change. This effort was designed to increase awareness and knowledge of techniques to mitigate and adapt to climate change, increasing climate resilience through horticultural techniques. Total Reach: 8 adults
- When surveyed, 63% of respondents shared that as a result of the program, they understood how evidence-based gardening practices can mitigate the effects of extreme weather due to climate change.
- An in person 12 session horticulture course (Sowing Success) where Marathon County (Wausau) residents and potential Master Gardener Trainees learn the fundamental principles of IPM based gardening. The goal of this effort is to increase awareness and knowledge of resources to address environmental contamination and pollution due to overuse of horticulture chemicals in urban and suburban environments. Total Reach: 16
- An in person 12 session horticulture course (Sowing Success) where Wood County (Marshfield) residents and potential Master Gardener Trainees learn the fundamental principles of IPM based gardening. The goal of this effort is to increase awareness and knowledge of resources to address environmental contamination and pollution due to overuse of horticulture chemicals in urban and suburban environments. Total Reach: 4
- A presentation for adults over 55 (Woodson YMCA-The Landing) where participants learned about Spotted Lantern Fly (SLF), including methods to scout and report. The goal of this effort is to increase awareness



and knowledge of resources to address environmental contamination and pollution due to overuse of horticulture chemicals in urban and suburban environments. Total Reach: 9

- Respondents stated as a result of the program they: Understood WHY SLF could become an emergent issue for Wisconsin gardeners: 100% Understood how SLF spreads into new territories: 100% Understood the methods to detect SLF: 100% Understood how to report: 100%
- A therapeutic gardening program for youth with court ordered supervision at a juvenile facility (Youth Opportunities Center), where adolescents learned about the importance of insects in the environment. The goal of this effort was to Increase awareness and knowledge of environmentally-sound gardening practices that simultaneously provide physical, social and emotional benefits of gardening. Total Reach: 3 youth
- 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.

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 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 landowners 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

- A one-day workshop for farmers, agronomists, and crop consultants, where participants learned about the latest research in optimizing weed management through the use of improved technology, precision agriculture, and conservation practices. The purpose of this effort is to help increase the resiliency of cropping systems in Wisconsin and manage weeds effectively while minimizing resistance and increasing profitability and sustainability in agriculture. Total Reach: 89 participants who affect 220,200 acres
- Planning for a training and field day for dairy heifer grazing technical service providers in collaboration with USDA-NRCS, SARE, Grassland 2.0, Tilth Agronomy, Glacierland Resource Conservation and Development, WI Land + Water, Wisconsin DNR, and WAPAC, so that technical service providers can expand their knowledge of dairy heifer grazing for economic and ecological outcomes.
- Solar Contract Basics for WI Landowners was presented in Marshfield at the AgCountry Farm Credit regional headquarters on August 21, 2024; in Madison, WI at the Farm Bureau Federation Headquarters on August 22, 2024 and virtually on August 26, 2024. More than 75 farmers and other landowners, as well as local elected officials, learned about renewable energy siting and engagement, common contract terms in solar lease agreements, the potential risks in solar lease agreements, and how to negotiate solar lease agreements mitigating or eliminating the risks while providing economic value to the farmer/rural landowner. Total Reach: More than 75 farmers and rural landowners, as well as local elected officials.
- 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 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.
- 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.

Upcoming Programs

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

Jeremy Solin <i>Area Extension Director</i>	Janell Wehr <i>Horticulture Educator</i>	Kris Tiles <i>NRI Program Manager</i>
Heather Schlessler <i>Dairy Agent</i>	Mallory McGivern <i>FoodWise Administrator</i>	Kathy Johnson <i>Administrative Assistant</i>
Holly Luerssen <i>4-H Program Educator</i>	Julia Perock <i>FoodWise Educator</i>	
Melissa Ohlrich <i>Regional Crops Educator</i>	Michelle Van Krey <i>Healthy Community Coordinator</i>	