

A REPORT FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DEAN
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
December 2018


*Wishing Everyone a Happy and
Healthy Holiday Season*

The Rutgers EcoComplex, located in Columbus, NJ, was ranked first in the “Best Business Incubator” category in *NJBiz Magazine’s* 2018 Reader Rankings. In addition, Rutgers Food Innovation Center (FIC) was one of two other finalists recognized in the same publication, New Jersey's leading business journal. More than 8,000 clients, colleagues, and peers of businesses in New Jersey voted for the best organizations across 52 categories. Established in 2001, the EcoComplex is a multidisciplinary “Clean Energy Innovation Center” that comprises 32,000 square feet of office and wet-lab space that has served more than 1,000 companies, to date, through its affiliated programs. These include the Ecolgnite Clean Energy Proof of Concept Center and Accelerator Program, which was established in 2017 with a \$439,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce to develop regional clean energy and energy efficiency business support system. The Rutgers Food Innovation Center is a global, award-winning food business incubator located in Bridgeton and Piscataway. Rutgers FIC, which was established in 2001, has provided extensive programs in training and workforce development, customized business and technical mentoring services, as well as USDA- and FDA-inspected manufacturing facilities for more than 2,000 food service clients, to date. In addition, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority recently approved the EcoComplex and the Food Innovation Center for its Incubator & Collaborative Workspace Rent Initiative, known as NJ Ignite, which provides up to \$150,000 in rent subsidy for tenants who locate in those facilities.

The Animal Sciences program at Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences was ranked eighth out of 76 schools nationwide by College Factual, which ranks programs offered by four-year colleges and universities. This puts the School’s program in the top 10 percent of all Animal Sciences programs in the United States. Also, Rutgers Animal Sciences program has been ranked first in New Jersey, making it the best in the state, with Rutgers achieving this ranking two years in a row.

The Gold Medal Horse Farm program is a collaborative initiative by Rutgers NJAES animal sciences faculty and Equine Science Center, and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. The award and program give recognition to outstanding equine farms for their dedication to environmental sustainability and management, and underscores the efforts of the New Jersey equine industry to maintain the beauty of the Garden State. The 2018 winner of this environmental stewardship award is Mortonhouse Farm, a 110-acre equine and beef cattle farm located in Long Valley, NJ. The farm is primarily a boarding and pleasure farm composed of 35-40 acres of pasture and up to 20 horses and riding trails. Hay and pasture produced on the farm provide most of the feed for the resident horses and beef cows. Mortonhouse owner John Crater has been involved in conservation programs and has adopted numerous environmental management practices, including rotational grazing, vegetative buffers, fencing, and pasture improvements. Crater has hosted numerous field days and Rutgers extension classes, and was previously involved in an on-farm research project to determine the effects of animal diet upon waste excretion.





A true summertime pleasure in New Jersey is devouring a juicy, succulent Jersey peach. However, not all fresh market peaches deliver these qualities, often as a result of chilling injury during cold storage. Chilling injuries, such as dry, mealy peaches, can limit the fruit's storage life as well as consumers' acceptance. In the November 1 issue of *Growing Produce*, an interview with **Dan Ward**, extension specialist in pomology at Rutgers Agricultural Research and Extension Center, offered practical steps for growers to reduce the problems associated with storing peaches. The initial challenge is harvesting fruits that are mature but not ripe. Ward said that varieties with less red color allow for determining peach maturity through underlying peel color. The next challenge is storing peaches at the correct temperature—with two optimum ranges, one for ripening, and one for cold storage. After picking and an initial cooling period, for "controlled ripening" fruit should be held in the warmer range, and then held at the cold storage temperatures. This results in less chilling injuries. Ward warns that holding peaches at temperatures between the two ranges—the "killing zone"—the environment is not cool enough to slow fruit deterioration, leaving it susceptible to chilling injuries.

A pop-up version of the New Brunswick Community Farmers Market (NBCFM) took place at New Brunswick's Lincoln Annex School (grades 4-8) in October. This health and wellness-based farmers market was part of a larger initiative to build a healthy food web in New Brunswick. The program, Community Connections, aims to build stronger bridges among local wellness initiatives in the New Brunswick community and nutrition and health-related activities in New Brunswick's schools, with the goal of supporting a healthier food and active-living environment for children and their families. When immigrant families adapt to new lifestyles and food choices, children can become the drivers of these changes. Community Connections is a collaborative project between Rutgers Department of Nutritional Sciences and New Brunswick partner organizations. By partnering and integrating with other initiatives, project leader **Nurgul Fitzgerald**, extension specialist in nutrition and public health, Department of Nutritional Sciences, aims to reinforce families being exposed to healthy messages on multiple fronts. In addition to the fall fresh fruits and vegetables on sale at the event through NBCFM, the students participated in interactive nutrition games and tasting of different apple varieties. About 175 students earned \$1 Market Bucks in classroom activities, which they then spent at the Farmers Market.

Of Interest:

An environmental and waste management booklet has recently been produced by the Rutgers Equine Science Center with funding from the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Extension specialist in livestock and dairy **Michael Westendorf**, Department of Animal Sciences, provided the content for the project, while public relations specialist **Kyle Hartmann**, Equine Science Center, completed the formatting, layout, and managed the publication. The booklet contains pull-out sections on manure, bedding, management and storage, manure spreading, composting, sacrifice or exercise areas, barnyard management, and environmental stewardship. Also included are two posters: one describing the state and federal regulatory structure for animal waste programs in New Jersey and another giving an overview of the waste management process on a farm. The goal is to educate horse producers about animal waste and environmental management and to provide a framework that can be followed to make management changes.

