

A REPORT FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE DEAN  
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture  
September 2020

Despite the many challenges of 2020, Rutgers Cooperative Extension's Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) has been successful in filling two positions vital to commercial agriculture in the state, and greatly enhancing Rutgers' regional and statewide expertise and outreach resources.



*Kate Brown*

**Kate Brown** joined Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Burlington County as a program associate as of September 1, working under the supervision of county agent **Bill Bamka**. Brown's focus within the county and regionally is in commercial crop production, including field, forage, and vegetable production, along with integrated crop management. She also leads the department's Farm Safety and Health Working Group. Brown has a bachelor's degree in plant science from Rutgers and is pursuing a master's degree in horticulture from Cornell University. She has four years of student research experience at NJAES, working alongside faculty, staff, and commercial growers at Snyder Research Farm and the Marucci Center for Blueberry and Cranberry Research and Extension, setting up

demonstration plots, IPM scouting, and producing educational videos and publications focusing on sustainable agricultural practices. As an undergraduate at Rutgers, she was the founding captain of the RU Equestrian Team (dressage).



*Melissa Bravo*

**Melissa Bravo** joined ANR on October 1, 2020 as the county agent III/assistant professor in Salem County, filling a two-year vacancy following the retirement of livestock agent **Dave Lee** in March 2018. Bravo's focus areas include field and forage (grain) crops production; livestock and animal agriculture; pasture management; and animal waste management. Her background includes running a business as an independent agronomic, invasive vegetation, and livestock herd health consultant and an agricultural contributor for *American Bee Journal*, *Lancaster Farming*, *Progressive Cattle*, and *Hay and Forage Grower*. Bravo previously served as extension associate II at Penn State University from 2005 – 2012 as the acting state botanist/weed specialist. She was an agronomist in Crop

Productions Services in Florida and a biological science technician for the National Park Service in Hyde Park, NY, during her graduate program. She has significant experience as the lead applicator-principal investigator applying pesticides in row crop, right-of-way, natural areas, vegetable crops, orchards, beef & dairy cattle, sheep, swine, equine, and small animals. She has a bachelor's degree in large animal production; veterinary track for swine, beef, and sheep production, with an equine minor from Delaware Valley University in Doylestown, PA. She obtained her master's degree in weed science at Penn State in 2002.



**Alvaro Toledo** is co-author of a study, “A Life Stage-Targeted Acaricide Application Approach for the Control of *Haemaphysalis longicornis* (Asian Longhorned tick).” The results show that single pyrethroid applications can provide 100% control of this tick species for up to seven weeks, and late-summer application during the end of host-seeking adult activity can provide close to complete control of the larval population.

### **Of Interest:**

The following new and revised fact sheets and bulletin are available on NJAES Publications:

[FS1323 Ticks, Lyme Disease, and Other Tick-Borne Diseases in Horses](#). **Williams, C.** and **Toledo, A.**

[E353 Recommended Guidelines for Domestic Livestock in Residential Areas](#). **Westendorf, M., Mickel, R.,** and **Williams, C.**

FS526 [West Nile Virus in Horses: Frequently Asked Questions](#). **Williams, C.,** and **Fonseca, D.**

FS737 [Questions Regarding Eastern Equine Encephalitis and Horses](#). **Williams, C.,** and **Fonseca, D.**

While the annual Rutgers Turfgrass Research Field Days were not held in person this year, the Rutgers Center for Turfgrass Science and the New Jersey Turfgrass Association have posted more than 30 video summaries of the cutting-edge research that was conducted this year at both the Adelphia and Horticulture Farm II turf research stations. The videos included in the Rutgers 2020 Virtual Turfgrass Research Field Day are available at the [Rutgers Center for Turfgrass Science YouTube page](#) and include the latest developments in turfgrass breeding, management, and weed and pest control.

The NJAES Hemp Team presented an online panel discussion and update on their experience this summer with the initial hemp field trials at NJAES farms and throughout New Jersey on October 13. The presentation is available on the [Rutgers Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education](#) site.

### **In the News**

[The Star-Ledger](#) interviewed **Brian Schilling**, director of Rutgers Cooperative Extension, about the adjustments Halloween agritourism attractions are making due to COVID-19.

*Growing Produce* posted the article, “[Ways to Keep Agritourism Relevant Through the COVID-19 Pandemic](#),” by Atlantic County agricultural agent **Rick VanVranken**, mentioning the resources the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Agritourism Working Group have developed.

### **Events:**

A part of the Equine Science Center’s “Ask the Experts” initiative, the center will host an online panel of experts to answer questions on equine health, pasture management, exercise physiology, manure management, and other topics on November 5. During this webinar, participants will have the chance to ask their equine-related questions to a panel of five equine experts. Information and registration are available [here](#).

