

EXECUTIVE DEAN OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
September 2021



The loss of life and damage to property from the September 1 passage of Hurricane/Tropical Storm Ida through New Jersey affected the entire state, resulting in a Major Disaster Declaration from FEMA for Bergen, Essex, Gloucester, Hudson, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, and Union counties. NJAES/RCE efforts to assist and inform residents, businesses, and communities in the wake of the storm included reporting to media and issuing special advisories. Below is a snapshot of some of the post-Ida efforts by NJAES personnel.

The [Office of the New Jersey State Climatologist](#) (NJAES) played an active role in the monitoring of Ida through the [Rutgers NJ Weather Network](#). The network's 64 stations were polled every five minutes and real-time observations were made available to the NJ Office of Emergency Management, the National Weather Service, media outlets, and the public. Of critical importance was the monitoring of 3-inch-per-hour rainfall rates that moved through a wide swath of central New Jersey during the evening of September 1. Copious rain induced deadly flash floods and subsequently, with additional rainfall, record crests on some rivers. Also, the office provided 26 media interviews concerning Ida, both pre- and post-storm.

Conditions during Ida generated an EF-3 tornado that tore through Gloucester County, destroying a number of homes, a vegetable farm, and the state's largest dairy operation. County agent **Michelle Infante-Casella** (Gloucester) was interviewed on the impacts of the tornado on the agricultural operations by *The Press of Atlantic City*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, and *American Agriculturalist*.

County agent **Melissa Bravo** (Salem) shared in the *Plant & Pest Advisory* a series of articles related to adverse weather that she had previously posted in [Progressive Forage](#). Bravo also advised caution about metal objects and other splintered particles in areas impacted by the debris field of tornadic and straight-line winds as well as receding flood waters. She reached out to an environmental remediation company that manufactures magnets to clean up field debris and discussed with them how farmers in the Midwest dealt with the metal fragments in unharvested cropland, which she shared with several local Board of Ag members.

Extension specialist **Mike Westendorf** (Department of Animal Sciences) posted in the [Plant and Pest Advisory](#) the status of feed grains or forages stored as hay or silage, or pasture that were flooded and remained underwater during Ida.



Department of Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS) (Somerset County) posted advisories on Facebook and Instagram, "Handling Food Safely After a Flood or Power Outage," with links to resources. The posts were further amplified through statewide social media accounts, registering significant viewership, with over 1300 people reached.

Of Interest:

A new Rutgers NJAES website that provides apple growers with weekly reports on apple maturity progression throughout New Jersey has been launched. These reports include background color (% red), firmness, soluble solids, and starch index, and are drawn from apples harvested from five farms throughout Northern and Central New Jersey. The data compiled in the reports is intended to aid apple growers in making decisions about the optimal time to harvest apples in their commercial orchards. The project is led by county agent **Megan Muehlbauer** (Hunterdon). [New Jersey Weekly Apple Maturity Review \(rutgers.edu\)](http://rutgers.edu)

The following new factsheet series is available on [NJAES Publications](#):

[E371: Livestock and Poultry Veterinary Care Services Series, Part I: What Kind of Vet Do I Need? How Do I Find One? \(Rutgers NJAES\)](#). Bravo, M.; [FS1335: Livestock and Poultry Veterinary Care Services Series, Part II: Federal Resources \(Rutgers NJAES\)](#). Bravo, M.; [FS1336: Livestock and Poultry Veterinary Care Services Series, Part III: State Resources \(Rutgers NJAES\)](#). Bravo, M.

Events:

The RCE Homesteading Academy is a new, once-monthly lunchtime webinar series for those interested in home-grown sustenance and self-sufficiency. From October through December, the first set of three sessions will feature presentation on backyard poultry, mushroom production, and beekeeping. The series will be ongoing, with potential future topics like sheep/beef/goats, seed saving and heirloom varieties, engine conversion to waste vegetable oil, troubleshooting for two-cycle engines, cut flowers, food preservation, small-scale grain milling, and more. The program is sponsored by RCE of Burlington County. [Homesteader-2-Flyer.pdf \(rutgers.edu\)](#)

Wellness Wednesday - Bringing Vegetables to the Table: A Celebration of the Harvest, FCHS, Oct. 20, 2:00 pm webinar, [Event Information \(Rutgers NJAES\)](#).

Turfgrass Disease Management - (ONLINE) Part 1, October 27, 9:00am - 12:00pm; Part 2, October 28, 9:00am - 12:00pm, Office of Continuing Professional Education, [Event Information \(Rutgers NJAES\)](#).

