

**May 2024**

### USDA Distance Learning Grant for Food and Agricultural Education



NJAES was awarded a [\\$232,378 USDA distance learning grant](#) to connect Rutgers–New Brunswick campus to three of its outlying research and extension facilities, providing access to education and training resources for thousands of farmers, food businesses, and residents. Funded under USDA’s Rural Utilities Service Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loan and Grant Program, the project provides distance learning equipment to support agricultural and food business viability and sustainability in southern New Jersey. The grant

specifically funds equipment that will be used by instructors from SEBS/NJAES and Rutgers Cooperative Extension, including faculty in New Brunswick – who will teach virtual courses on topics such as plant diseases, soil health, crops, health and nutrition, food safety, risk management, regulatory compliance, value-added products, beginning farmer, business development, and more. The project leads are **Peggy Brennan-Tonetta**, NJAES Director of Resource and Economic Development, and **Brian Schilling**, Director of Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

### Results of Community-Based Deer Management Program and Drone Surveys



Management activities to protect the Hutcheson Memorial Forest Center from deer damage began in 2015, with the construction of deer fencing around 85 acres, followed by the initiation of a community-based, doe-focused, volunteer bowhunting program in 2019. A [study conducted by Joseph Paulin, Rutgers Cooperative Extension and Gene and Ellie Huntington of Steward Green](#), involving drone surveys was implemented before the initiation of a community-led management hunt that began in November 2019. Pre- bowhunting drone surveys revealed that density estimates in the area were nearly 150 deer per square mile and greatly exceeded the recommended levels of 10 deer per square mile. Since the management bowhunting program began and deer numbers have decreased, ecologists have observed native vegetation returning to the forest. The program can serve to inform decision-makers and act as a successful model for areas experiencing negative impacts from overabundant deer populations causing damage to local forests, residential areas, and agricultural lands. An additional benefit of the program has been

the donation of over 13,000 servings of protein to the Franklin Foodbank to help those in need in the community.

## Of Interest

The following updated fact sheet is available on [NJAES Publications](#):

[FS1245: Build a Better Smoothie](#)

Hughes, L., Helmy, Y., and Hughes, K.

### **Rutgers Day Attracts Tens of Thousands to the New Brunswick Campus**

The [New Brunswick Campus welcomed throngs of visitors on April 27 for Rutgers Day](#). The George H. Cook Campus was home to Ag Field Day, which traces its beginnings to August 1906 when the first Field Day (*the original name for Ag Field Day*) was held at the College Farm with roughly 800 people in attendance. Present day Rutgers Day/Ag Field Day is hosted by the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences and New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station and offers New Jersey residents the opportunity to learn more about and participate in the university's environmental, marine, food and agriculture-related programs. The event featured student exhibitions of dairy cattle, goats, horses, pigs and sheep; arts and crafts; plant and flower sales; and student club activities.

### **Rutgers Soil Testing Laboratory**

Spring is a great time of year to have your soil tested. [Rutgers Soil Testing Laboratory](#), located on the Cook Campus, offers analyses of soils for New Jersey residents, farmers, and Rutgers university researchers.

## Events

### **“Don't Sweat Heat Stress in Agriculture” Webinars on June 5 and June 12**

The New Jersey Legislature is currently reviewing identical bills (A3521/S2422) that would establish an occupational heat stress standard and “Occupational Heat-Related Illness and Injury Prevention Program” under the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The **Farm Health and Safety Working Group of Rutgers Cooperative Extension** has launched an educational program on heat stress mitigation in agriculture, including weekly “Beat the Heat” articles published in the Rutgers Plant and Pest Advisory E-Newsletter and is working on an updated Rutgers factsheet, “Preventing Heat Stress in Agriculture.” In partnership with New Jersey Farm Bureau, the working group will host a two-part webinar series, “Don't Sweat Heat Stress in Agriculture.”

Wednesday, June 5, from 7 – 8 p.m.

An introduction to heat stress issues in agriculture and tools that farmers can use to evaluate heat risk and recommended resources for guidance on heat stress prevention.

Wednesday, June 12, from 7 – 8 p.m.

An overview on signs of heat stress and corresponding first aid, as well as strategies for heat stress prevention. Plus, a panel of farmers will discuss their currently used strategies for employee management during periods of high heat.

Register at <https://go.rutgers.edu/heat-stress-in-ag>. Any questions, contact Kate Brown, RCE of Somerset County, at 908-526-6293 x4 or by email at [kbrown@njaes.rutgers.edu](mailto:kbrown@njaes.rutgers.edu).

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