

FROM THE GROUND UP

Program Updates and News
from the NWCS Program Team



University
of Vermont

Extension
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences



<https://www.uvm.edu/extension/nwcrops>

May 2026 Newsletter

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News and Updates

The Robots Are Coming! Join Us for Vermont's First Public Demonstration of the BOTONY Robotic Weeders from Greenfield Robotics

Future Ready Dairy Farm Tour Series

Precision Agriculture in Action: Robotic Weeding on Dairy Farms & Herd Health Monitoring Systems

Tuesday, June 30, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Henry Bros. Wolf Ridge Dairy, 2053 Greenwoods Road, Alburgh, VT, 05440

Join UVM Extension specialists for a demonstration of BOTONY robotic weeders at Henry Bros. Wolf Ridge Dairy Farm in Alburgh. Agronomy Specialist Jeff Sanders and Precision Ag Specialist Daniel Bliss, both of UVM Extension, will demonstrate the BOTONY robotic weeders developed by Greenfield Robotics in Lenexa, Kansas. These fully automated bots mow weeds between crop rows, potentially reducing herbicide use. Jeff and Daniel will also discuss their ongoing project assessing the bots' potential in Vermont's landscape.



After the demonstration, head to Ladd Family Farm at 345 Alburgh Springs Road in Alburgh for a Stonyfield Organic-provided lunch. The Ladds will talk about their experience using the smaXtec herd health monitoring system. Culminating

in a guided farm tour, this event will be a great opportunity to connect and see innovative tools in action.

[Learn More](#)

[Register Now](#)

Soil Health Research and Extension Center (SHREC) Lab Now Accepting CEMA 216 Soil Samples

The UVM Soil Health Research and Extension Center (SHREC) Soil Health Lab is now accepting soil samples that meet NRCS Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity (CEMA) 216 requirements. Farmers enrolling in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the new Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP) are required by the USDA to complete soil health testing. This standardized testing package measures five core soil health indicators, providing a comprehensive assessment of soil function to support conservation planning and program participation.

SHREC staff have been engaging with technical service providers, practitioners, and soil scientists across the state to spread the word about testing options and how to integrate soil health data into management decisions.

[SHREC CEMA 216 Soil Health Testing Package](#)

NEW FACT SHEET: Guidance for Vermont Growers During Planting to Reduce Risks to Wildlife from Insecticide-treated Seed

Insecticide-treated seeds can expose pollinators, birds, freshwater invertebrates, and other wildlife through dust drift during planting, movement into soil and water, uptake into nearby plants, and consumption of spilled or visible seeds. When planting insecticide-treated seeds, take steps to reduce off-site movement and lower risks to wildlife. Integrated pest management (IPM) approaches such as scouting, monitoring, crop rotation, and threshold-based decision making can also help to inform the use of insecticide-treated seeds, which are often planted even when pest risk is low.

The Xerces Society created a Vermont-focused fact sheet that offers growers practical guidance for reducing off-site movement and wildlife exposure from insecticide-treated seed during planting and disposal, along with IPM approaches for early season insect pests.

[Reducing Risks to Wildlife from Insecticide-treated Seed Factsheet](#)

💰 Paid Research Project Recruiting Dairy Producers

A collaborative project between the University of Vermont and Penn State Extension is currently recruiting dairy producers in the Northeast who keep calves with nurse or foster cows. The goals of this project are to evaluate cow and calf health in nurse cow systems and better understand the needs, challenges, and priorities of producers using these systems. Participation involves a one-time farm visit, during which our research team will conduct health assessments of cows and calves and administer a short questionnaire about your

experiences.

Participating producers will receive \$50 and have the opportunity to connect with other dairy farmers rearing calves with cows.

If you are interested in participating or would like more information, please contact Kate Creutzinger at 513-218-2721 or Kate.creutzinger@uvm.edu.



[Learn More](#)

2027 Capital Equipment Assistance Program (CEAP) Grant Applications Due July 15, 2026

The Capital Equipment Assistance Program (CEAP) provides state grant funding for new or used innovative equipment that will aid in the reduction of surface runoff of agricultural wastes to state waters, improve water quality of state waters, reduce odors from manure application, separate phosphorus from manure, mitigate greenhouse gases, and reduce costs to farmers when they apply manure.

CEAP can fund up to 90% of the cost of the purchase and setup of approved equipment, not including shipping, freight, and/or travel fees. The grantee must provide the remaining 10% of project cost. Other grants can be used to fulfil this match requirement.

[Learn More](#)

[Register](#)

Upcoming Events

Tri-State Dairy Exchange Monthly Webinar Series: Advancing Dairy Systems through Technology

Wednesday, May 27, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Topic: Next-level Crop & Nutrient Management with Track Tracker Pro's Tracking & Automation

Speakers: DJ Jirinec, Founder and Managing Member of JP Soft LLC; Jacob Jirinec, Software Engineer at Track Tracker Pro; and Matt Langford, Director of Business Development at Track Tracker Pro



Track Tracker is a real-time geolocation and operational tracking platform purpose-built for dairy, manure, and ag operations where timing, visibility, and accountability matter. It delivers live GPS tracking, geofencing, and event-based reporting to give managers a clear, accurate picture of what's happening across farms, fields, routes, and bunks—without relying on guesswork or manual logs.

This presentation will highlight practical use cases in dairy and manure management, including bunk management, chopper and truck tracking, load verification, and time-on-task visibility. Guest speakers will discuss how Track Tracker improves feed delivery accuracy, reduces missed or duplicated work, and provides reliable data on equipment movement, task duration, and key operational events.

[Learn more about Track Tracker Pro.](#)

[Watch Previous Webinars](#)

[Register Now](#)

Future-Ready Dairy Farm Tour Series

Real farms. Real conversations. Real solutions.

In addition to the June 30 event on robotic weeders and smaXtec technology mentioned earlier in this newsletter, there are many more in the series. Please join us to see firsthand how producers are adapting to a changing dairy landscape while staying efficient, profitable, and positioned for long-term success.



Forage Irrigation Using Brown Water at Severy Farm, Cornwall, VT

Thursday, June 25, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

This workshop will discuss forage irrigation using brown water. Joshua Faulkner will discuss trial results as well as forage quality and yields. Attendees will also be able to see Nate Severy's irrigation system and ask questions.

Farm Tour at Rowley Brother's Farm, Milton, VT

Tuesday, July 7, 2026, TBD

Farm Tour at Stony Pond Farm, Fairfield, VT

Thursday, July 9, 2026, Time TBD

Farm Tour at Skyline Holsteins, Derby Line, VT

Thursday, September 3, 2026, Time TBD

[View our Conferences webpage for updated details when available.](#)

Questions? Please contact Amber Blodget at 802-656-7610 or ablodget@uvm.edu.

[Register Now](#)

Northwest Crops and Soils Annual Field Day

Thursday, July 23, 10:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Borderview Farm, 487 Line Road, Alburgh VT 05440

Cost: Free for farmers. \$30/per person for non-farmers. Lunch is included.

Please join us for the 19th Annual Crops and Soils Field Day! All are welcome! This event is a culmination of our research, outreach, and community engagement efforts. Attend workshops and sessions led by industry experts, network with community members, and learn about the latest local agricultural innovations.

Interested in sponsoring this event? [Please register as a sponsor here.](#)

Interested in reserving an exhibitor table for your business or organization? [Fill out this form as soon as possible.](#) Spots are limited!

Questions? Please contact Susan Brouillette at 802-656-7610 or Susan.Brouillette@uvm.edu.

[Learn More](#)

[Register](#)

Research Spotlight



It's All in the Timing: Terminating Cover Crops for High Grain Corn Productivity

By Elizabeth M. Seyler, Heather Darby, and Lindsey Ruhl

Are you growing grain corn? This article is for you! In the UVM Extension Northwest Crops and Soils Program (NWCS) 2024 report “Impact of Cover Crop Termination Timing on Grain Corn Productivity,” we describe our research to assess the impact of cover crop termination timing on weed biomass, corn seedling populations, vigor, pest damage, and grain corn yield. Read about the results!

[Read the Report Summary](#)

Outcroppings Blog



Soil Health Research and Extension Center (SHREC) Lab Marks One Year of Providing Farm-focused Soil Health Testing and Education

Happy one-year “SHRECiversary” to the Soil Health Research and Extension Center (SHREC)! Established in 2025, SHREC aims to meet the needs of farmers by offering soil health testing tailored specifically to them. Learn more about SHREC’s first year of operation in the full article.

[Read the Full Article](#)



Better Together: The 2026 Grain Growers Conference Celebrates Local Food and Collaboration

In March, the NWCS program and the Northern Grain Growers Collaborative (NGGC) hosted the 22nd annual Grain Growers Conference at the Essex Resort and Spa in Essex, Vermont. This year, the event attracted 121 guests who enjoyed 18 sessions throughout the day. Read about conference highlights in the full article.

[Read the Full Article](#)

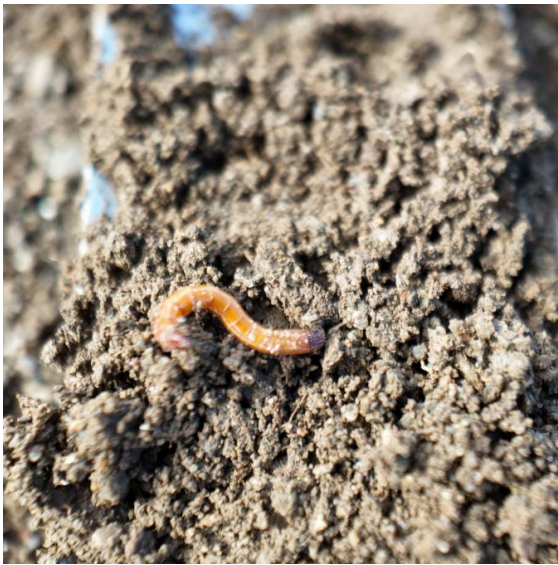
Photos



John Bruce and Sara Ziegler setting up the high tunnel for our vegetable trials this season.



The strawberry plants are now safely tucked under their low tunnels.



The team assessed pest presence in fields planted with corn and soybeans for our neonicotinoid research project. Pictured above is a wireworm, the immature form of a click beetle, which can cause damage to corn seeds and plants.



A member of our team collecting neonicotinoid-treated seeds for assessment in the lab. Throughout the growing season, we will monitor plants at each growth stage to better understand when pest pressure poses the greatest risk.

[Subscribe](#)

UVM Extension NW Crops and Soils Program | [Website](#)

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For more information contact shannon.macdonald@uvm.edu

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