



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
DUNN COUNTY

August 2025 Report

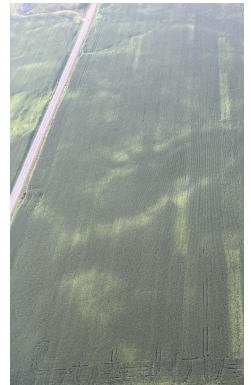
Agriculture

Jerry Clark | *Regional Crops & Soils Educator*

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A field event for farmers where participants learned management strategies to limit nitrogen application rates to increase farm profitability and protect groundwater resources. (In collaboration with: Lindsey Rushford & Steven Hall)



An on-farm research study to better understand manure application, commercial nitrogen application rates, and nitrogen credits on corn yield and potential effect on ground water. Results from this study will help farmers, agriculture industry professionals, and agency professionals in adjusting manure and commercial nitrogen applications to optimize corn yield and protect groundwater resources. (With: Christine Clark, Joshua Kamps, Lindsey Rushford, Liz Gartman, and Scott Reuss)

An on-farm study to better understand the effect of nitrogen application rates on nitrogen cycling and corn yield. Results from this study will help corn growers in that they can implement and adapt nitrogen management practices to optimize economic return, improve efficiency of nitrogen fertilizer resulting in more sustainable corn production and farm profitability.

A field event for farmers where participants learned management strategies to limit nitrogen application rates to increase farm profitability and protect groundwater resources.

Groundwater quality is a major concern in Dunn, Chippewa, and Eau Claire counties. Use of nitrogen in agriculture production fields is often needed for higher crop yields. Application of additional nitrogen and above-average rainfall can increase the risk of nitrogen moving to groundwater.

A nitrogen management and water quality field day was held as part of the Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program to inform farmers of nitrogen management strategies. The field day also highlighted how groundwater moves and how field surface management leads to impact on groundwater.

Participants increased their knowledge about nitrogen application and management and how different nitrogen management strategies may impact groundwater.

Speakers and topics include, Dr. Steven Hall, Extension Water Quality Specialist, UW-Madison, Department of Plant and Agroecosystem Sciences, "Understanding nitrogen movement and lysimeter results from 2024"; Lindsey Rushford, Extension, On-Farm Nitrogen Optimization Coordinator, "What we have learned through NOPP"; and Jerry Clark, Extension, Regional Crops and Soils Educator, "Local on-farm nitrogen research results."



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Spotlight

Groundwater quality is a major concern in Dunn, Chippewa, and Eau Claire counties. Use of nitrogen in agriculture production fields is often needed for higher crop yields. Application of additional nitrogen and above-average rainfall can increase the risk of nitrogen moving to groundwater. A nitrogen management and water quality field day was held as part of the Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program to inform farmers of nitrogen management strategies. The field day also highlighted how groundwater moves and how field surface management leads to impact on groundwater. Participants increased their knowledge about nitrogen application and management and how different nitrogen management strategies may impact groundwater. Results from nitrate-trapping lysimeters installed in 2024 were discussed. Corn yield results from 2024 were discussed along with nutrient and water management including tile line impacts. Speakers and topics include, Dr. Steven Hall, Extension Water Quality Specialist, UW-Madison, Department of Plant and Agroecosystem Sciences, "Understanding nitrogen movement and lysimeter results from 2024"; Lindsey Rushford, Extension, On-Farm Nitrogen Optimization Coordinator, "What we have learned through NOPP"; and Jerry Clark, Extension, Regional Crops and Soils Educator, "Local on-farm nitrogen research results."



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Ryan Sterry | Regional Livestock Educator

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Ryan attended the Northern Wisconsin State Fair, Dunn County, and Eau Claire County Fairs, along with attending two pasture walks, a nitrogen optimization project field day, as well as a local cooperative field day, in an effort to introduce himself to the area and learn more about livestock producer needs in the Chippewa Valley.

Provide livestock-related articles published in the Extension in the Valley, tri-county monthly newsletter that focuses on Agriculture and Horticulture news. In the current issue, participants learned about corn silage pricing, pre-conditioning calves, and upcoming programs. This effort is designed to keep participants connected to current agriculture and horticulture topics. (With: Jerry Clark and Margaret Murphy)

Planning a September 2025 in-person, full day, lambing school for Northwestern Wisconsin. The goal is to help producers prepare ahead of winter lambing. This workshop will cover essential topics, including biosecurity, animal health, parasite management, and nutrition, to ensure your flock thrives. Focused on sheep, but goat producers are also welcome to participate. Learn about the necessary lambing supplies, the phases of lambing, and effective lamb processing techniques. Thanks to generous support from the American Sheep Industry Association, hands-on activities include a realistic lambing simulator. (In collaboration with: Carolyn Ihde)

Planning a September 2025 in-person late afternoon meeting hosted on a commercial beef operation and taught by livestock, and crop and soil educators. The goal is to increase cow-calf producers' understanding of heifer reproduction and fall forage management to improve their farm's economic viability. (With: Sandy Stuttgen, Bill Halfman, Jerry Clark, and Melissa Ohlrich)

Planning a hybrid workshop series for dairy and beef producers, and dairy workers (in Spanish) in September 2025. The goal is to provide information and techniques to boost cattle caretakers' (including Hispanic dairy workers) confidence in preparing the cow for calving, obstetric techniques, and newborn calf care so that their health and reproductive programs maintain their farm's economic viability. (In partnership with: Sandy Stuttgen, Heather Schlessner, and Matt Lippert)

Spotlight

The Livestock Program Plan of Work objectives include leading multi-county cow-calf production in-person meetings. Beef programming evaluation data and producer surveys indicate that cow-calf producers value in-person sessions where scientifically peer-reviewed topics are taught that will help increase their bottom line. Stuttgen solicited a local beef producer and the North Central WI Cattlemen's Association to sponsor this twilight meeting near Stanley, WI, in September 2025. Livestock



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educators Stuttgen, Sterry, and Halfman, along with crop and soil educators Ohlrich and Clark, are developing the topics they will teach. Curriculum and marketing are underway. Outcomes will be reported after the meeting from the attendees' evaluation responses.

Horticulture

Margaret Murphy | Regional Horticulture Educator

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An activity for families where participants engage in a field walk on a nature trail to explore signs of animal usage of the habitat and to learn how a natural ecosystem supports and interconnects a community of fauna. This effort focuses on looking for animal tracks and is designed to increase awareness about the importance of natural areas and to increase family activities exploring nature.

A program on accessible and adaptive gardening for the public where participants discover how gardening can be a lifelong source of wellness, connection and joy. This effort is designed to show participants how to keep gardening part of one's life and continue to gain the physical, nutritional, mental and social benefits it offers. (Partnered with: Deanna Wiersgalla, Michelle Bachand)

Provide garden articles published in the Extension in the Valley, tri-county monthly newsletter that focuses on Agriculture and Horticulture news, where participants learn about various topics. This month includes harvesting garden produce, soil testing and soldier beetles. Links to UW Madison Extension fact sheets, garden articles and upcoming events are also provided. This effort is designed to keep participants connected to current horticulture topics and concerns. (In collaboration with: Amber Gilles, Jerry Clark, Ryan Sterry)

Planning, coordinating and presenting the optional Lab component of the fall 2025 Foundations in Horticulture online course for course participants where they can dig deeper into important horticulture concepts and apply what they learn through interactive activities. This effort is designed to increase both knowledge and confidence in addressing topics of pruning, soil testing, IPM and plant identification. (In partnership with: Amy Freidig, Andy Heren, Julie Hill)

Spotlight

Saw an increase in interest from the public to discuss strategies on how to keep gardening safely and efficiently as we age. Research supports numerous benefits we receive from gardening physically, nutritionally, emotionally and mentally all of which can help us remain more vital as we age. Offer a presentation on the benefits gardening provides with an emphasis on strategies to keep gardening accessible as we age or for anyone who may experience challenges in mobility or other areas. Provide



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several ergonomic/adaptive tools for participants to explore and review. Encouraged discussion on how we might rethink our gardens and gardening practices to make them easier on our bodies and fit our needs as they change. I view this program as dynamic that will continue, hopefully, to evolve.

Community Development

Garret Zastoupil | *Regional Community & Leadership Development Educator*



Planning for a three-part workshop series titled "Building Powerful Networks of Support" for librarian directors, staff, volunteers, and leaders in collaboration with IFLS Library System. The goal is to build the strategic capacity of these individuals to lead their organizations, so that they can strengthen volunteer, financial, and community support for libraries across the IFLS region.

Continued development of the Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative and its efforts to re-open the former St. Joseph's Hospital in Chippewa Falls as an full-service interim healthcare facility, and to build a new full-service hospital in Lake Hallie, Wisconsin to replace the 34% of regional health care lost with the closure of the two HSHS hospitals in Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls and 19 Prevea clinics across the region. (In collaboration with: Bill Oemichen, Karl Green, and Kristen Bruder)

Co-Chairing the Childcare Action Team with Health Dunn Right, guiding a new group to identify its mission and goals, and development and implement an action plan. The goal of the group is to support affordable, accessible, high-quality childcare in Dunn County by bringing together a variety of partners from the business, education, and nonprofit communities.

Spotlight

The 2024 Dunn County Community Health Needs Assessment identified Childcare as a top need in Dunn County. The Dunn County Human Development and Relationship Educator approached the Community and Leadership Development Educator about co-chairing a new Childcare Action Team with Health Dunn Right, the coalition group that leads the Community Health Improvement Plan. As a new group and an issue that is essential to community vitality, it was important for the educator to step into this role. The educator has lead a new group through a strategic doing process that allowed the action team to set goals and action plans.



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Health and Well-Being

Sandy Tarter

FoodWise Coordinator



Joy Weisner

FoodWise Educator



Hillarie Roth

FoodWise Educator



Macy Lien

FoodWise Educator



Spotlight

For over 30 years UW–Madison Extension has been providing local nutrition education throughout our state that has been funded by the federal SNAP–Ed grant program. Our FoodWise educators have been a cornerstone of Extension’s mission to improve the health and well-being of Wisconsin residents.

FoodWise reaches over 133,000 people with nutrition education and community-based strategies to support healthy eating and active lifestyles – partnering with schools, food pantries, farmers markets, and community centers to engage children, families, and seniors. Despite extensive advocacy efforts by Extension, UW–Madison’s University Relations, and partners such as the Wisconsin Counties Association, the congressional budget reconciliation bill signed into law on July 4 eliminated all SNAP–Ed funding effective September 30, 2025.

FoodWise is one of six SNAP–Ed implementing agencies in the state, and Extension is currently navigating the difficult process of winding down our SNAP–Ed-funded programming including a layoff notice process for affected employees. We will continue FoodWise programming through September 30, 2025. We will also be exploring all possible pathways to sustain some of the program’s capacity through alternative funding sources, including leveraging our infrastructure, expertise, and remaining EFNEP funding.

This is not just a loss of funding – it is a loss of services that have been vital to communities across Wisconsin. FoodWise’s staff of more than 90 educators across the state have directly helped families with limited incomes make a healthier choice for their future. The impact will be felt in schools, food pantries, and community centers where our educators have helped families make healthier choices and stretch limited food dollars.

FoodWise has always been about more than just nutrition education. It’s about empowering communities to thrive. We know that SNAP–Ed makes Wisconsin healthier. We are proud of the work we



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have done and the lives we have changed for the better. Thank you for supporting our staff, our programs and our mission.

Extension's commitment to your community remains and we will continue to bring university resources to residents in your area across our program areas. Please reach out to Sandy Tarter, FoodWise Nutrition Coordinator, sandy.tarter@wisc.edu, and Area Extension Director Kristen Bruder, kristen.bruder@wisc.edu, with your questions.

Human Development and Relationships

Luisa Gerasimo | *Human Development and Relationships Educator*



Dunn County's Birth to 3 Program recently shared the **Just In Time Parenting Newsletter** flyer with sign up information in their newsletter. The goal of this JITP is to get evidence-based parenting information into the hands of parents and caretakers every month with information that pertains to the age/stage of their child so that children are afforded the best start in life possible.

Parents Forever is a co-parenting class that local family courts often require for parents and caregivers experiencing separation, divorce or changes in the custody of their children, where they learn skills to prioritize the parent-child relationship and better communicate with their co-parent. This program is designed to increase child well-being and reduce parental conflict during family transitions. (With: Missy Bablick, Barron County's Family Engagement Educator)

I continue to co-facilitate the **Housing Action Team (HAT)** with Paula Winter, the Human Services Director. This coalition is organized under the Public Health Department and meets regularly to address the lack of affordable, safe and quality housing options for Dunn County. Our group has worked to map local housing resources, and to better understand the difficulties in rental and home buying for our area. We are working to draft goals for the coming year and have settled on these as guiding our upcoming work. 1: Create organizational maps of housing-related programs and initiatives. 2: Provide educational materials and support to community members to understand housing-related policy, programs, applications, etc. 3: Advocate for safe, affordable, quality housing for community members.

Resilient Co-Parenting, is a monthly topic-specific series for parents and caregivers experiencing separation, divorce, or changes in the custody of their children, where they learn skills to improve communication and problem-solving, support children emotionally, and keep kids out of the middle of conflict. This series is designed to improve understanding of positive parenting practices that are useful during stress, while providing social connection for parents experiencing family transitions. (Developed with: Hannah Zellmer, Adam Trunzo, Amanda Griswold, Beverly Doll, Heidi Ungrodt, Mary Campbell Wood, Missy Bablick, Pamela Wedig-Kirsch, Pattie Carroll, Renee Koenig, Todd Wenzel, Tracy



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Making Reading Memories/Literacy Link is a program I run monthly in the Dunn County Jail with the cooperation of the educational programs director. Parents in jail are video take an interactive reading workshop, pick out books for their children and then are recorded reading storybooks, which are then mailed out to the children at home. The goal is to reduce the trauma of separation, strengthen family relationships and at the same time increase children's exposure to books and reading. As of this month, I've already distributed over 60 books to families.

Spotlight

In the United States, 1 in 2 people have a close relation who has been incarcerated. In Wisconsin, conservative estimates suggest that nearly 90,000 children have experienced the incarceration of a parent with whom they live. Parental incarceration is associated with increased risk of negative outcomes for children, including impacts on behavior, academic success, and health. To date, few strategies exist to support relationship maintenance among parents in jail or prison and their children.

Extension's Family Engagement and Relationship program partners with local correctional facilities, including jails and state prisons, across Wisconsin to provide the evidence-informed Making Reading Memories program for parents while they are incarcerated. Making Reading Memories is offered in counties throughout Wisconsin via Extension Human Development and Relationship educators.

As a result of the Making Reading Memories workshop, most parents who participate enjoy creating the videos for their children and agree that the videos help them feel closer to their children. Most parents feel more confident reading to their children in the future. Parents report enjoying focusing on their children during incarceration and feel a sense of connection to their families. Most caregivers of the children who receive the videos and respond to our follow-up survey report that the videos helped their children stay connected to the parent in jail or prison. Most children have a positive reaction to the video, display positive emotions while watching the videos, and enjoy receiving the book. About half of caregivers even report reading more often with their children following receiving the video and book.

The impact of the Making Reading Memories program is important because parent incarceration can have profound impacts on child well-being and the parent-child relationship. The Making Reading Memories program improves communication and connection between parent and child during incarceration, mitigating the impact of forced separation and ambiguous loss within the family.



Positive Youth Development

Zachary Rozmiarek | 4-H Program Educator



A Cloverbud Stuffed Animal Show was held at the Dunn County Fair where youth who cannot show live animals had the opportunity to practice showing with their stuffed animals. This gave them showmanship experience, and helped to boost their confidence with talking to judges.

Work has been done to create a new visitor's center for the 4-H program at the Dunn County Fair. We have created displays and planned youth activities.

We have also partnered with the Dunn County Historical Society to set up exhibits.

Sam Stephens, the Dunn County 4-H intern planned, organized and presented a day camp for cloverbuds in Dunn, Eau Claire, and Chippewa Counties. She was assisted by the Eau Claire and Chippewa County interns.

A foods and nutrition project day was put on for the cloverbuds. They learned how to make a healthy treat while using cooking skills such as measuring, mixing and freezing.

The Dunn County 4-H team created a 4-H visitors center in the old milk house at the Dunn County Fair. They made informational signs for visitors to read, collected projects to display, and had hands-on activities for the youth to do on their own. They also partnered with the Dunn County Historical Society to create historical displays. Finally, they were on hand for 4 days during the fair to guide young fair goers in educational activities.

Spotlight

Younger youth do not have an avenue into showing animals. Many who show do it because they have the animals already. For those that do not, they need a way to practice to see if it is something they want to do, and worth the investment. They also need a way to build excitement about showing animals. In response to this need, I created a Stuffed Animal Show for our youngest members. They spent time practicing how to show their animal and then during the fair, they talked to the judge about it. I modified a rabbit judging sheet to make it more applicable to stuffed animals. In addition to showing, they all filled out a worksheet on their animals where they got to share information about it, and draw a picture of it. This allowed them to gain writing skills and use their imagination with the responses. There were many positive impacts of this event. Many of the parents of the participants shared that their youth gained confidence with speaking and helped with not being nervous in front of people. Others shared that it helped with responsibility as they had to "take care" of their animals. Finally, all of the families that responded to the survey said that they feel more connected to 4-H and all but one are excited to show



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animals in the future.

Area Extension Director

Kristen Bruder | *Area Extension Director – Dunn, Chippewa, and Eau Claire Counties*



Please reach out with questions and ideas. The role of the AED is much like the department head in the county. Below is a brief overview of the role of AEDs: Extension fully invests in Area Extension Directors (AEDs) who oversee an area. These administrative positions are responsible for partnership management, staff development, financial management and program coordination.

Through the many interactions the AED has with county partners and local educators, the AED develops a solid understanding of the local needs and county priorities and helps to align Extension educational programs to ensure the programs address county needs. Educators also communicate local needs to their programmatic Institutes which collectively identify opportunities to address statewide needs.

Value Added Programming

A SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) Analysis for leadership and management professionals for the Recovery and Wellness Consortium, where participants were guided through an idea-generating process and activities. Through this focused effort, hundreds of ideas were generated to guide the next strategic plan for this nine-county consortium. (Margo Dieck, & Deanna Wiersgalla)

Co-Chairing the Chippewa Valley Suicide Prevention Workgroup, which covers suicide prevention efforts in Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties. The goal of this group is to collaborate on efforts to reduce deaths by suicide in the region. (Margo Dieck)

Navigator enrollment assistance provided to anyone in Wisconsin, where 97,013 consumers were assisted with health insurance questions or enrollment. Through this effort, our Navigators completed 4,041 qualified health plan enrollments through the federal Health Insurance Marketplace and assisted 5,615 consumers with Medicaid, resulting in widespread access to health care and improved health outcomes. (Adam Vanspankeren, Allison Espeseth, Elizabeth Rothe)

A coaching program for families and individuals, where participants learn how to create financial goals and gain money management skills. The goal of this program is to enable participants to prepare for and take charge of household financial situations that occur due to changes in income or unforeseen hardships. (Jeanne Walsh)



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Upcoming events

[Event Calendar – Extension](#)

[United Way Day of Caring October 9, 2025](#)

Dunn County Extension in the News

Ryan Sterry:

[Lambing Basics Workshop](#)

[Calving Workshop Series b University of Wisconsin Extension – Chippewa Herald](#)

[Beef Cow-calf, fall forage twilight meeting is Sept. 9 – Chippewa Herald](#)

Jerry Clark:

[UW-Madison Hosts Manure Field Day in Menomonie](#)
