



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
DUNN COUNTY

# November 2025 Report

## Agriculture

Jerry Clark | *Regional Crops & Soils Educator*



*Sign up to receive the Extension in the Valley agriculture and horticulture e-newsletter [HERE](#).*

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 N management practices to optimize economic return, improve efficiency of N fertilizer resulting in more sustainable corn production and farm profitability. (Help from: Deanna Wiersgalla & Ryan Sterry)

A nutrient management program for farmers where participants learned to identify nutrient application strategies and management decision points to improve farm profitability and protect ground and surface water. The goal of the program is to increase overall efficiency of nutrients applied to the landscape.

An AgriAbility of Wisconsin program for staff from Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Health Services Independent Living Centers where staff learned about a Day in the Life of a Farmer related to crop production to increase awareness of seasonal and day-to-day functions on a crop production farm.

A clinic for students where students learned forage feed and nutrition analysis recommendations and the nutrition impact on dairy cattle and type and structure of dairy cattle to improve forage and feeding practices and increase dairy production efficiency and improve farm profitability. The goal of the program is to increase knowledge and understanding of the importance of forage and feeding impact on dairy animals. (In collaboration with: Amber Gilles, Jordan Blue, Ryan Sterry)

A land evaluation clinic for students where participants learned land management principles, soil properties, and land use, to increase effective land management practices and maximize soil and agricultural land production into the future. The goal of the program is to increase knowledge and understanding of the importance of land and soil management and the impact agriculture and commercial development has on the land. (Assistance from: Amber Gilles)

Planning for three in-person and one virtual crop management update programs for crop growers, agency staff, consultants and educators. The goal is to provide timely crops and soils management updates where the audience learns about the most recent research findings from University of Wisconsin and Extension specialists that can help them make more productive and profitable decisions moving into the 2026 crop season. (With: Liz Gartman, Anne Pfeiffer, Daniel Smith, Joshua Kamps, Kevin Jarek, Megan Sankey, Melissa Ohlrich, Scott Reuss, Will Fulwider)



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## Spotlight

Commercial nitrogen application can be a major expense in the production of corn grain and silage. Nitrogen also possesses risk to moving through the soil profile to groundwater and off-site to surface waters such as rivers and lakes. Management of nitrogen fertilizer is important to protecting farm profitability and water resources. The Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Project is grant-funded program through the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer protection. The funding is to encourage farmers to implement on-farm research around rates and management of commercial nitrogen fertilizers. Farmers and Regional Educators are collaborating to implement on-farm research to discover corn yield and water quality effects of various rates of nitrogen to areas of fields with and without applied manure. The purpose of the project is to understand how manure application impacts the Maximum Return to Nitrogen (MRTN) for corn throughout the growing season. The research seeks to validate the recommended manure nutrient credits and MRTN values for corn. Participating farmers and extension educators anticipate there will be an increase in yield for plots with manure and nitrogen applied, but a lower crop response to nitrogen as the amount of nitrogen applied increases. This would allow manure sample data to be utilized to correlate total amounts of nitrogen received for each plot to the harvested yield. Six rates of nitrogen from 0, MRTN farm rate, +/-40, +/-80 pounds per acre are applied with four replications with and without manure application at five farms across Wisconsin in 2025. Corn grain and silage yields were measured along with soil nitrate levels. Water quality measurements through lysimeters installed at one location will assist in evaluating the movement of nitrate nitrogen through the water profile. This two-year study continues to analyze and evaluate 2024 data along with new 2025 data. The project has been granted an extension to complete another year of data collection on three farms in 2026.

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## Ryan Sterry | Regional Livestock Educator



In October and November, Ryan met with community partners to continue efforts to learn about livestock producer needs and develop programmatic relationships in the Chippewa Valley. Examples include the Chippewa County Ag Education Council, Chippewa Valley Technical College Animal Science Advisory Council, Northern Wisconsin State Fair, Farmer-Led Watershed Council staff, UW-River Falls agriculture students, and more.

An educational article for the Wisconsin Agriculturalist magazine, for farmers and ag industry professionals, focusing on replacement beef heifer selection and development.

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An artificial insemination course for dairy and beef producers, where they learned how to breed their own cattle. Through this program, producers will be able to save money and increase reproductive rates by breeding their own cattle in a timely fashion. (Hosted with: Heather Schlessner, & Sandy Stuttgen)

## Spotlight

*An artificial insemination course for dairy and beef producers, where they learned how to breed their own cattle. Through this program, producers will be able to save money and increase reproductive rates by breeding their own cattle in a timely fashion. (Collaborated with: Heather Schlessner & Sandy Stuttgen)*

- *Artificial insemination (AI) is an important tool for dairy and beef producers to make genetic improvement. In the past decade, a need for training has arisen due to fewer private companies in Wisconsin offering AI training. Also during this time, companies have realigned and concentrated their service areas, sometimes creating voids in AI services for hire. As a result, dairy and livestock educators have collaborated to develop and deliver an AI program for beef and dairy producers. As a result of this work, 14 people were AI trained in the Fall of 2025. Participants were asked to complete a pre/post style evaluation to measure their change in knowledge relating to the various topics covered. Participants indicated an overall change in knowledge of 1.12 on a 4-point Likert scale. Participants were asked to rank the various topics taught, and they indicated that AI practice in cows, AI Technique, Reproductive tracts and semen handling, and Heat Detection were their most valued topics.*

## Horticulture

**Margaret Murphy** | Regional Horticulture Educator

Extension in the Valley agriculture and horticulture e-newsletter, view newsletters [HERE](#).



Developing a Community Garden Oversight Committee to increase educational outreach and community involvement at the gardens. The goal is to ensure the gardens are sustainable, well-maintained, and inclusive spaces for all members, foster community engagement and provide educational opportunities for gardeners and the public.

Planning work on invasive plant awareness and removal for 2026. The education committee is currently developing a plan to identify goals and actions steps to provide educational outreach to the public on invasive plant identification and management.

## Spotlight

*This planning is in conjunction with the Chippewa Valley Biodiversity Partnership Education Committee which is focusing on the importance of invasive plant awareness, identification and management outreach to the general public.*



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## Community Development

Garret Zastoupil | Regional Community & Leadership Development Educator



Planning for Operational Direction and a Strategic Workshop Series for Department Heads and Oversight Committees in collaboration with the County Manager and Board Chair. The goal is to facilitate structured working sessions to guide departments through the tiered service catalog and environmental scan, so that leadership is equipped to make intentional policy decisions and difficult budget choices based on a shared, data-driven framework.

A walking tour with presentations from downtown organizations and business owners as part of the Food Entrepreneur Ecosystem Development (FEED) Summit. Participants learned about the opportunities that downtown, business district organizations, and others can offer entrepreneurs at various stages in their business development, providing encouragement and identifying resources for entrepreneurs to consider when opening or expanding their businesses. (In partnership with: Patrick Nehring)



The 2025 statewide FEED Summit, hosted in Eau Claire, is a catalyst for entrepreneurial ecosystem development in Wisconsin's food and farm sectors. Designed to support new and emerging entrepreneurs, the event fosters sustainable business growth through strategic networking, resource sharing, and capacity building—ensuring long-term viability and resilience for early-stage ventures. (With: Hannah Altimus, Addison Vang, Cathryn Herlihey, James Pyecroft, Kelly Maynard, Lissa Radke, Michelle Grimm, Patrick Nehring, Sara Tedeschi, Stephanie Plaster)

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.

### Spotlight

*Community-serving organizations, including nonprofits, local governments, and coalitions, are more effective when they have a clear purpose/mission, vision, and goals. When there are changes in leadership, resources, community needs, and other internal or external factors that affect the organization, it is a best practice to engage in some form of strategic planning to set priorities, focus energy and resources, and ensure everyone is working towards common goals. Extension met with organization leaders to diagnose the needs of the organization. When strategic planning was identified as a need, Extension worked with the organization leaders to design and facilitate a systematic process that was unique to the organization, and*





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*which helped the organization create, affirm, or revise its mission, vision, and goals. Extension also helped the organization facilitate the development of action plans intended to move the organization forward in addressing its goals. The strategic planning process facilitated by Extension generated several important outcomes for the organization. First, the process provided clarity and direction as outlined in the strategic plan report. Second, it taught organization leaders about the importance of planning as a tool for increased organizational capacity. Third, the strategic planning process built trust, understanding, and shared knowledge that will lead to collective action to address local needs. Led preliminary strategy workshops to map the organization's role within the broader regional ecosystem of care. Drafted a Strategic Planning Proposal that prioritizes cross-sector collaboration and continuum-of-care gaps. The Goal: To position Hope Gospel Village not just as a service provider, but as a community anchor, so that fragmented support systems are replaced by a unified, faith-forward pathway out of homelessness and addiction.*

## Health and Well-Being

**Sandy Tarter**

*FoodWise Coordinator*



**Joy Weisner**

*FoodWise Educator*



Update on FoodWise funding: Due to an extended timeframe to use FoodWise carryover funding, Area FoodWise Coordinator Sandy Tarter and FoodWise Nutrition Educator Joy Weisner positions will each be reduced to 50% on December 1, 2025, and continue on until the end of the federal/FoodWise fiscal year, September, 2026.

Continued planning for transition of kitchen supplies and FoodWise resources to local partners. The goal is to share equipment and curriculum for adults needing support with independent living skills including healthy eating and food preparation.

Sharing of FoodWise Hmong Food Fact Cards to area Food Service Directors and partners. This addition of culturally relevant Hmong vegetables added to the Harvest of the Month collection will bring awareness and knowledge of these foods to local partners in effort for them to potentially incorporate these vegetables with their menu selection.



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## Human Development and Relationships

Luisa Gerasimo | *Human Development and Relationships Educator*



**Planning for continuing education workshops** in six regions of Wisconsin for childcare providers in collaboration with the Child Care Resource and Referral Network. The goal is to provide high-quality, research-based education to directly improve childcare providers' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors and indirectly improve child well-being. (In collaboration with: Lindsay Weymouth, Alicia Utke-Becher, Amanda Griswold, Carol Bralich, Hannah Zellmer, Kula Yang, Lisa Bents, Missy Bablick, Pattie Carroll, Robert Nix, Roxy Etta, Sarah Hawks, Tracy Henegar)

**Planning for an annual virtual conference** (Raising Wisconsin's Children) for parents, caregivers, and family-serving professionals. The goal is to provide research-based, high-quality content about child development and parenting and to link new Wisconsinites to Extension outreach. (With: Lindsay Weymouth, Amanda Griswold, Beverly Doll, Bridget Mouchon, Danielle Hairston Green, Hannah Zellmer, Missy Bablick, Pattie Carroll, Roxy Etta)

**A co-parenting class (Parents Forever)** for parents and caregivers experiencing separation, divorce or changes in the custody of their children, where they learned 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. (In partnership with: Missy Bablick)

**Free Children's Books at the Dunn County Government Center:** The family educator connected a number of partners, including the Menomonie Public Library and Dragon Tale Books, to initiate a waiting room bin that encourages families to read together while waiting for county appointments and allows children to select a book to take home. The bin is being restocked monthly.

**A monthly topic-specific series (Resilient Co-Parenting)** 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. (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 Henegar)



### Spotlight

*UW Madison Extension Dunn County was asked to staff a table at a community walk on a Sunday in October. The hope of the two nonprofits sponsoring this*



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event was that the community get to know what is available to them so as to build awareness while fundraising. Extension provided a table with a wide variety of horticultural, agricultural, 4-H and Human Development resources and a representative to engage the participants in conversation. The educator was able to send many local families home with laminated Emergency Preparedness checklists, phone numbers to connect with our horticultural educator, and handouts on 4-H. Many families were unaware that Extension offers parenting and relationship classes/resources and a number of participants picked up related materials.

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## Positive Youth Development

Zachary Rozmiarek | 4-H Program Educator



The December Clover Courier can be viewed [HERE](#).

The trout have arrived and I began teaching lessons to the students. We will be going into the classroom once or twice a month to teach about trout biology and environmental conservation. The students started off by learning how to test the water quality and the nitrogen cycle. This activity is providing opportunities that would not otherwise be available.

Planning has concluded for a county-wide 4-H event at the Mabel Tainter Theater. Fifty-nine 4-H members and their families have signed up to attend White Christmas. The ticket orders have been organized, money has been collected, and the tickets have been purchased from the Menomonie Theater Guild. Everything is set for the event on December 7th. This event will promote community among 4-H families as well as offer an opportunity that the youth may not otherwise have.

Planning for multi-county youth development programming for 4-H members and community youth in collaboration with Area Six 4-H educators. The goal is to deliver engaging events in speaking, STEM, robotics, performing arts, and leadership throughout the year, so that youth across Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties have expanded access to skill-building opportunities and collaborative learning experiences. (In collaboration with: Jordan Blue, & Rachel Hart-Brinson)

The Project Discovery Day took place on November 8. 4-H members and the community came to participate in a variety of 4-H projects. Many of the participants were new members or community members who were interested in joining 4-H. This event promoted the program as well as allowed the youth to find new interests.



### Spotlight

Theater and the arts is a sparks area that is missing in Dunn County 4-H. In the past years, we have only had one club put on a play at the Performing Arts Festival. Last year we didn't have any plays from Dunn



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*County. Additionally access to seeing live performances is limited, especially for lower income households. I have tried to make this event as accessible as possible. In addition to the reduced rate from the Theater Guild, I am using some of the funds that are set aside for me from our Leaders Council to help cover more of the cost. I am also organizing an educational component to this event.. It is my hope that having the youth watch a play, and learn about it, will spark their interests in Theater Arts.*

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## Value Added Programming

Regional workshop conducted for WI Department of Health Services Maternal and Child Health Title V Adolescent Well-Being Initiative Year 3 Local/Tribal Health Department grantees. The 60-minute workshop included a presentation on the UW-Extension Youth Substance Use Prevention Toolkit. Questions and feedback was invited from participants around how this toolkit could support their adolescent well-being work. (Sarah Boulton, Danette Hopke, Jen Braun, Selena Freimark, Sheena Cook-Fuglsang)

Development of a handout to direct participants at local food pantries to resources and assistance for basic needs. The goal of this effort was to promote 211, FindHelp, and 988 for wrap-around support for local residents who are experiencing food insecurity. (Margo Dieck)

Over the past year, Covering Wisconsin has coordinated and overseen 12 regional- and population-focused coalitions in which Wisconsin professionals interested or directly involved in health insurance enrollment gather to discuss changes to health coverage policy, share outreach and educational strategies, receive free professional trainings, and offer ideas for relevant consumer resource messaging and design. Through our efforts, a total of 88 coalition meetings were held, attracting 1,649 attendees, to focus on the health coverage issues affecting Wisconsin residents, especially immigrants, Spanish-speaking residents, Hmong residents, and those located in Central, East Central, Milwaukee, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Western regions. (Caroline Gomez-Tom, Allison Espeseth)

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)

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## 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.

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### Upcoming events

[Event Calendar – Extension](#)

### Dunn County Extension in the News

Jerry Clark: [Private Pesticide Applicator Training](#)  
[2026 Wisconsin Pesticide Applicator Training Guide](#)