

Extension Eau Claire County

July 2025 Report

Agriculture

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Jerry Clark | Regional Crops & Soils Educator



A West Central Wisconsin Land and Water Summer Tour for conservation professionals where participants learned about local conservation production practices, research, and technology to increase understanding of the environmental impact of agriculture on the landscape and strategies to protect environmental resources.

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.

A field event for farmers, agronomy professionals, and conservation agency staff where participants learned soil nitrogen and forage management strategies to minimize nitrogen application rates and ensure forage inventory to increase farm profitability and protect groundwater resources. (Jerry Clark, Ryan Sterry, Teal Polzin)

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. (Jerry Clark, Christine Clark, Joshua Kamps, Lindsey Rushford, Liz Gartman, 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, agronomy professionals, and conservation agency staff where participants learned current season pest and crop management strategies to scout for pest populations and minimize crop protection inputs to increase crop enterprise and farm profitability. (Jerry Clark, Matthew Bolen, Teal Polzin)

Spotlight

Partners and farmers in all three counties I serve have identified nitrate in groundwater as an issue in their county. Nitrogen Use Efficiency on-farm field research plots were established in Eau Claire and Dunn Counties. This research addresses the challenges to questions surrounding selection of N fertilizer rates, use of pre-plant and pre-sidedress nitrate tests, crediting nitrogen from manure and other on-farm nutrient sources. The research also investigates how to best use soil health nutrient tools to improve sustainability of nitrogen management practices. Nitrogen rates applied in the study are 0, 40, 80, 120, 160, and 200 (preplant and sidedress) pounds per acre. Field plots were sampled for pre-plant nitrate soil tests. Yields will be collected and compared to nitrogen rates applied within the replicated plots. The data from this on-farm research project will be used to help farmers and agronomists with nitrogen management decisions. Data will be analyzed for potential yield and soil nitrate differences between nitrogen application rates.

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Ryan Sterry | Regional Livestock Educator



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. (Sandy Stuttgart, Bill Halfman, Jerry Clark, Melissa Ohlrich, Ryan Sterry)

Planning a hybrid (Zoom classroom session followed by in-person hands on session) workshop series for dairy and beef producers and farm workers in September 2025. The goal is to provide information and techniques to boost cattle caretakers' 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. Spanish translation has been requested. (Heather Schlessner, Matt Lippert, Ryan Sterry, Sandy Stuttgart)

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. (Ryan Sterry, Carolyn Ihde)

A webinar, one session part of Badger Dairy Insight, for dairy farmers and dairy industry professionals, where participants learned about updates to Heifer synchronization protocols to promote increased heifer pregnancy rates. (Heather Schlessner, Jackie Mccarville, Paul Fricke, Ryan Sterry)

Spotlight

Badger Dairy Insight is a monthly webinar offered to dairy farmers and dairy industry professionals around topics related to reproduction, nutrition, emerging technologies, and animal welfare to increase their knowledge around the latest University research. Then the reproduction and genetics workgroup provided speakers to talk on changes to heifer synchronization protocols. Attendees and those watching the recording of the presentations will have knowledge on changes to heifer synchronization protocols to increase breeding success.

Horticulture

Margaret Murphy | Horticulture Educator

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Garden class on planting containers for the public. Participants learned best practices on caring for container plants, ideas for container designs and planted both sun and shade containers for display at a public library. This effort was designed to promote success with container gardening and to encourage people to include plants and gardening in their lifestyle even when space is limited to experience the many benefits that gardening provides.

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A garden program for participants of a community based residential facility where participants created a mixed garden design of vegetables and flowers in a small plot. Classes focus on continued maintenance of the garden and strategies for managing pests/problems that may arise. The goal of this effort is to teach the basics of vegetable gardening as well as to encourage people to include plants and gardening in their lifestyle even when space is limited to experience the many benefits that gardening provides. Total Reach: 14-20 participants. Collaborated with: Sandy Tarter

Provide garden 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 common issues of tomatoes, growing eggplants, upcoming programs and were provided links to more horticulture articles and information found at UW Horticulture Division of Extension. This effort is designed to keep participants connected to current horticulture topics. (Margaret Murphy, Amber Gilles, Jerry Clark, Ryan Sterry)

Program for families visiting Lake Wissota State Park on the types of animals that roam the Park and how they use their habitat. Participants learned how to be a wildlife detective by examining the clues they leave behind, especially their scat. This effort was designed to increase awareness about the importance of natural areas and the community of fauna they support as well as to encourage people to explore nature.

Spotlight

The program was a result of an ongoing partnership between the Extension horticulture educator and the Lake Wissota State Park volunteer naturalist to provide nature/plant-based programs for the public and raise awareness on the importance of natural areas and the benefits of spending time in them. The program included an overview of animals commonly found in the park together with ways to determine what they may be eating and other ways they are using their habitat. The program included interactive activities and handouts.

Community Development

Garret Zastoupil | Community Development Educator



Planning for a series of mini-publics and workshops for community members, service providers, and individuals experiencing homelessness in collaboration with the Eau Claire Department of Human Services and Eau Claire City/County Public Health Department. The goal is to collaboratively develop concrete, actionable strategies for supporting individuals experiencing homelessness, so that we can ensure all community members have safe housing, strengthen our collective sense of belonging, and realize Eau Claire's potential as a truly welcoming and inclusive community. (Garret Zastoupil, Amber Wichowsky)

Planning for the launch of the "Chippewa Valley Nonprofit Exchange," a collaborative effort to consolidate nonprofit resources and professional development opportunities. The Exchange aims to strengthen nonprofit capacity by developing and sharing resources.

Continued development of the Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative and its efforts to re-open the former St. Joseph's Hospital in Chippewa Falls as a 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. (Bill Oemichen, Garret Zastoupil, Karl Green, Kristen Bruder)

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While the educator was conducting the community needs assessment, he met with several organizations in the region that were also offering leadership and nonprofit development opportunities in the Chippewa Valley. One nonprofit executive director reached out in Winter 2025, requesting a collective meeting of nonprofit "supporters" including UWEC Continuing Education, UWEC Leadership Program, Pablo Foundation, and Extension to discuss coordinating activities and sharing programs and opportunities. The group is currently meeting to advance its efforts, coordinate a response and begin longer-range planning.

Health & Well-Being

Sandy Tarter
FoodWise Coordinator

Joy Weisner
FoodWise Educator

Hillarie Roth
FoodWise Educator



Collaboration with the Eau Claire Downtown Farmers Market to advance the Market Match program with sustainable funding. This effort will provide additional resources to FoodShare families to purchase SNAP eligible foods, provide added income for vendors, and continue to strengthen relationships with corporate sponsors.

A garden program for participants of a community based residential facility where participants created a mixed garden design of vegetables and flowers in a small plot. Classes focus on continued maintenance of the garden and strategies for managing pests/problems that may arise. The goal of this effort is to teach the basics of vegetable gardening as well as to encourage people to include plants and gardening in their lifestyle even when space is limited to experience the many benefits that gardening provides. (Margaret Murphy, Sandy Tarter)

A collaboration with Eau Claire Master Gardener Volunteers, Eau Claire City Parks and Recreation, Chippewa Valley Builders Association, and Chippewa Valley Technical College to start activities in implementing the FoodWise Grant program- Year 2. This effort will replace 9 raised beds and widen pathways for accessibility in the North River Fronts Kids Garden. Planning efforts continue for Boys and Girls Club teens to help the Master Gardener Volunteers prep the old garden beds and we are hoping to have the garden bed reconstruction completed in September.

A 6-week series with Eau Claire Boys & Girls Club of the Greater Chippewa Valley at the North River Fronts Kids Garden from June - August in collaboration with the Master Gardener Volunteers, and in partnership with the City of Eau Claire Parks and Forestry Division. This effort integrates nutrition education with gardening and expects to increase exposure to locally grown fruits and vegetables by tending a garden, helping youth learn parts of the plants, engaging in interactive activities, and providing tastes of a variety of fruits and vegetables.

We had an awesome few weeks at the North River Fronts Kids Garden! Youth tried mixed greens, broccoli, cauliflower, summer squash, radishes, kohlrabi, stir-fry, beet smoothies, and refreshed with Hmong Cucumber Water! In addition to

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nutrition and garden education, they learned how to support the growth of butterfly chrysalis and had a session on floral arranging. Kids have picked a grand total of 29.75 pounds of produce in the month of July! Harvested veggies are used in daily tastes/recipes and shared with the families at the EC Boys and Girls Club!



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 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.

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Margo Dieck | Health and Well-Being Educator



Collaborating with Safe & Sober Spaces to survey adults in the community looking for community and connection in sober-friendly environments. This effort also includes a distribution plan to community members and local partners.

*"The Safe & Sober Spaces Task Force on a mission - we want to know where adults in Eau Claire County go to feel **safe and sober**, and how we can create or improve those places. Please share your thoughts in our short survey by Friday, August 8th: <http://bit.ly/4IQarmY>."*

Collaborating with the Youth Mental Health Task Force to survey adults who care for or work with youth. The goal of the survey is to understand what topics adults want more information on for talking to young people, what their preferred learning method is, and who their trusted sources are. Future plans include disseminating the survey in Eau Claire County and using results to plan for future action steps.

A series of meetings for WeCOPE facilitators where the curriculum is being reviewed and revised. This effort is being conducted to ensure quality learning experience for participants in this program and to support consistent facilitator delivery of the content. (Sheila Michels, Danette Hopke, Janeth Orozco, Jennifer Park-Mroch, Margo Dieck, Sara Ennocenti)

Spotlight

The recent Surgeon General report declared an epidemic of loneliness and social isolation, noting the negative health consequences of people not engaging with others in their community. Supporting strategies that increase opportunities for building relationships and community connections can improve mental health. Similarly, in recent years, surveys of youth at the national, state, and local level show increasing mental health needs among youth. Many factors impact youth mental health, such as in-person and online bullying and lacking trusted adults in their lives. Helping youth build healthy relationships and coping mechanisms can lead to a lifetime of improved mental health. (2025-2027 Eau Claire County Community Health Improvement Plan)

Positive Youth Development

Rachel Hart-Brinson | 4-H Program Educator



A summer school 4-H club was held at North High School for 4-8th graders where we learned basic crochet, designed and sewed a stuffy, practiced wool felting, and learned basic sewing skills. The goal was for people to build skills in fiber arts, explore a spark, and to build resilience through challenge. Nineteen people registered and



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attended this short-term club experience and everyone except one said that they would recommend it or sign up again.

A summer school 4-H club was held at North High School where we worked in teams to bake a variety of items including crackers, cream puffs filled with pastry cream, chocolate zucchini cupcakes with chocolate frosting, sunflower seed oatmeal cookies, and English muffins. The goal was to increase baking skills and practice resiliency in the face of failure or mistakes in the kitchen. Twenty-one young people enrolled in the class and that many were also on the wait list. They told me that it was challenging, but not TOO challenging. They all want to join the club next year.



Testimonial: Thanks so much for this great class! Evie had a blast! She's hoping to take it again next summer and would be interested in a cooking class, too!

4-H Activity Tables where 4-H members and volunteers led activity stations for youth attending the fair. This was to provide leadership experience to youth members and also an opportunity to promote the 4-H program.

We prepared two different scavenger hunts for the Eau Claire County Fair--A paper scavenger hunt and a virtual scavenger hunt on GooseChase. Both were to promote the exploration of the fair and to provide bonding and relationship-building opportunities for 4-H members and the Fair-going public. The Goosechase was developed in partnership with two high school 4-H members and targeted 4-H members or attendees to the fair for multiple days. The paper scavenger hunt was targeted at a younger audience and someone who was there just for one day.

Spotlight

Youth can enroll in 4-H starting the year that they are in 5-year-old kindergarten. In the grades between kindergarten and 2nd grade, youth enroll in the Cloverbud project. Research shows that relationships and belonging are important to a quality program. Some kids don't want to join 4-H without knowing someone in a club. Relationships built at a young age mean that youth will have friends in their 4-H clubs. We hope that having quality programming for grades K-2 will improve retention for kids in older grades.

We also find fewer opportunities in the community for those in grades K-2 than in 3rd grade and up. When we have offered programs for grades K-2 and 3-5, we always have more enrolled in the one offered for the K-2 age. We decided to offer a day camp series with different topics each day, planned by our Area 6 interns. Each day was offered in a county--one offered in Dunn, Chippewa, and Eau Claire with each intern's office in charge in that county.

The Wonderlab Day Camp experience aimed to provide exploration of STEAM topics, including tie-dye, slime, journaling, and playing animal-themed games in a positive youth development atmosphere.

The Eau Claire County Summer Positive Youth Development internship offers an opportunity for young people to practice positive youth development principles and develop skills in program development, leadership, and education.



Eau Claire County intern, Gracie Gray, leading the tie dye activity.

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Area Extension Director

Kristen Bruder | Eau Claire, Chippewa, and Dunn Counties



The role of the AED is like that of the department head in the county. If you have ideas, thoughts, or want to chat about Extension please reach out! 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.

For a full list of upcoming events throughout Extension, click [here](#)

Value Added Programming

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)

Covering Wisconsin creates education, outreach, and promotions messaging and tools for the public that are disseminated through myriad formats and venues around Wisconsin (e.g. toolkits for community partners, social media campaigns, bus placards and billboards, streaming digital ads, resource events and fairs, trainings for professionals, and health insurance literacy "How To" sheets). Through this programming, we help people in Wisconsin obtain, effectively understand and utilize health insurance, reducing the number of uninsured and underinsured people in our state. (Colleen Harryman, Tina Marshalek)

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