

Extension Eau Claire County

September 2025 Report

Agriculture

For updated Valley E-Newsletters click [here](#)

Jerry Clark | Regional Crops & Soils Educator



A field day for farmers, consultants, and agency personnel where participants learned the impact of liquid manure injections and surface applications to reduce soil disturbance, retain nutrients, and protect surface and groundwater. (Jerry Clark, Deanna Wiersgalla, Michelle Bachand, Ryan Sterry)

An on-farm study to better understand industrial hemp fiber and grain performance related to varieties, effect of planting date, tillage treatments, and nitrogen application rates. Results from this study will help hemp growers select better performing varieties and optimize economic return to nitrogen to increase sustainable hemp production and farm profitability.

An in-person workshop for beef cow-calf producers, where participants learned about selecting heifer replacements, fall weed control, winter feeding, and truck and trailer safety. Through this workshop, beef cow-calf producers can make informed decisions when it comes to management practices. (Beth McIlquham, Bill Halfman, Jerry Clark, Sam Bibby)

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.

Spotlight

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. A Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program grant through the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection was secured in 2024 to investigate the effect of manure and commercial nitrogen on corn grain and silage yields. 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, 40, 80, 120, 160, and 200 pounds per acre are applied with four replications at six farms across Wisconsin. Water quality measurements through lysimeters installed at one location will assist in evaluating the movement of nitrate nitrogen through the water profile. This is a two-year project to be completed in fall of 2025.

Extension Eau Claire County

September 2025 Report



Ryan Sterry | Regional Livestock Educator

A September 2025 in-person beef cow-calf producer meeting was hosted on a commercial beef operation and taught by livestock, crop and soil educators. The goal was to increase cow-calf producers' understanding of heifer reproduction and fall forage management to improve their farm's economic viability. Total Reach: Thirty individuals attended, of which 33% responded to a post-workshop evaluation. Their feedback showed they gained knowledge in several areas: heifer selection by 1.7 points, dewormer resistance by 1.4 points, soil sampling and understanding the pasture soil report increased by 1.3 points, and hay sampling and understanding forage reports by 1.0 point. When asked what strategy they plan to use, 40% chose soil sampling, 40% chose hay sampling, and 10% planned to apply dewormer knowledge. They suggested future meeting topics such as cow/calf nutrition, treatments and vaccinations, cattle handling, and obstetrics. (Collaborated with: Sandy Stuttgen, Bill Halfman, Melissa Ohlrich, Jerry Clark, Sandy Stuttgen)

An article was written that explores the potential shifts in reproduction management associated with adopting Automatic Milking Systems (AMS). Changes in reproduction management can have significant effects on herd performance and subsequently impact farm economic performance. This article provides an unbiased summary of considerations related to reproductive management in AMS situations. (Katelyn Goldsmith, Heather Schlessner, Ryan Sterry)

Spotlight

The adoption of automatic milking systems (AMS) has steadily increased since their introduction, with an estimated 6-8% of Wisconsin dairy farms now using the technology. AMS introduces an opportunity to adjust reproductive management practices, prompting farmers and advisors to seek reliable guidance. A comprehensive article series ("Understanding Automatic Milking Systems (AMS)") is being developed. Kaitlyn Goldsmith, Heather Schlessner, and Ryan Sterry collaborated on an article providing a summary of foundational considerations related to reproductive management in automatic milking systems (AMS) to be posted on the Extension Dairy Team website.

Horticulture

Margaret Murphy | Horticulture Educator

Sign up to receive [Extension in the Valley](#) and for more garden articles, visit [Seasonal Gardening Articles](#).



Provide garden articles to the public published in the Extension in the Valley, tri-county monthly newsletter that focuses on Agriculture and Horticulture news, where participants learn about various topics. Articles coming soon include yard and garden tasks for October. Links to UW Madison Extension fact sheets, garden articles and upcoming events are also provided. This ongoing effort is designed to keep participants connected to current horticulture topics and concerns. (In collaboration with: Amber Gilles, Jerry Clark, Ryan Sterry)

A field event for 5th grade students where participants learned about pollinators, native plants and invasive species. The goal of this effort was to increase awareness of the importance of pollinator conservation, native plants and the removal of invasive species. (Margaret Murphy, Amber Gilles, Jerry Clark, Jordan Blue)

The University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming in compliance with state and federal law.

Extension Eau Claire County

September 2025 Report

A presentation for the public on native plants and pollinators where participants learned the value of creating native niches in their landscape to support a host of different insect pollinators. This effort was to encourage individuals to adopt gardening practices that increase pollinator habitat and support pollinator health throughout the year.

A walk through the wildflower trail at Lake Wissota State Park for the public where participants learned about native plants and how they positively impact the local ecosystem and support native wildlife. This effort was to provide information on native plants while actively engaging in a productive, healthy and scenic native plant system to encourage attendees to consider incorporating native plants into their own landscape.

A class on fall yard and garden cleanup for the Lake Wissota Garden Club where participants learned and discussed tasks and strategies for balanced, eco-friendly fall yard and garden care that supports birds and pollinators.

A class with students on fall clean-up of their garden that included taking a soil test and discussing preparations for next spring. This effort was designed to connect and encourage youth to participate in gardening and enjoy the benefits gardening offers and experience the feeling of accomplishment.

An activity for people living with dementia and their care partners. Surrounded by the beauty of an apple orchard, attendees participated in an art activity and created their own unique piece of glass fusing allowing them to tap into their imagination and creativity while using fine motor skills. The experience also provided a sense of accomplishment, positive socialization, and a way to stimulate the senses.

A class on gardening with kids at the 2025 UW Stout Family and Consumer Sciences Education and WI DPI Childcare Conference where participants learned how gardening can enrich a child's life in many ways. We discussed strategies on how to create a garden space just for kids and about available research-based youth garden curriculum. This effort was designed to encourage gardening with youth with strategies to engage kids in gardening activities.

Spotlight

This program came about after the conference organizer reached out to ask about giving a talk on gardening with kids, again as I presented on the topic at the conference two years earlier. The conference attracts a diverse group of educators which presents an opportunity to discuss how gardens are a great place to cultivate a meaningful and fun learning experience for children. Gardening offers numerous benefits for children. It promotes healthy eating habits, encourages physical activity, and enhances motor skills. Furthermore, gardening cultivates responsibility, patience, and a connection with nature.

Community Development

Garret Zastoupil | Community Development Educator



An educational presentation for county government leaders at the Wisconsin Counties Association Annual Meeting, where a regional educator and state specialist shared emerging trends and key components of effective strategic planning to empower them to create more resilient and forward-thinking counties and communities. (Garret Zastoupil, Elizabeth McCrack)

A community conversation for local landlords, homeless, and housing-focused nonprofits, where participants discussed past efforts and identified opportunities for progress to build stronger relationships and improve housing solutions for the homeless community.

The University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming in compliance with state and federal law.

Extension Eau Claire County

September 2025 Report

A study to better understand the motivations, aspirations, and practices of strategic planning within Wisconsin's county governments. Results from this study will help Extension in improving how it supports strategic planning efforts across the state. (Garret Zastoupil, Amber Wichowsky, Elizabeth Mccrank, Sarah Schlosser)

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.

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)

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)

Facilitated a 2-day planning and design workshop to help the community of Fairchild, Wisconsin make improvements to community infrastructure (parks, trails, downtown, etc.). Members from 3 local organizations as well as citizens at-large worked together to develop a shared vision for future development and enhancements to community infrastructure in Fairchild. The 2-day workshop provided a forum to collect information to inform community placemaking planning and design alternatives that the community could use to make Fairchild more vibrant. (Todd Johnson, Garret Zastoupil, Krist Runge, Melissa Kono, Todd Barman)

Spotlight

The community of Fairchild requested assistance in developing a shared vision for multiple public spaces to improve access, visibility, and vibrancy. This specialist worked with colleagues and pro-bono consultants to mount a Design Wisconsin community design charrette. This 2-day planning and design process included site visits, interviews, and focus groups to identify community values, needs, and elements to create a shared vision of the public realm for Fairchild, Wisconsin. As a result of this effort, community members are developing implementation plans to realize their shared vision.

Extension Eau Claire County

September 2025 Report

Health & Well-Being

Sandy Tarter
FoodWise Coordinator

Joy Weisner
FoodWise Educator

Hillarie Roth
FoodWise Educator



Planning for transition of kitchen supplies and nutrition education for low-income adults in collaboration with partners UW- EC, Affinity House, Life Without Limits, and Western Dairyland-Fresh Start. The goal is to share resources and create sustainability with some limited nutrition education services for adults needing support with independent living skills including healthy eating and food preparation.

Spotlight

Thanks to Brian Barth, CVTC Instructor, and his students in the Residential Construction class for building new raised beds for the North River Fronts Kids Garden. They helped to install the beds on September 11th with Ashley Construction, who also helped to pay for lumber costs along with a Foodwise Garden Grant funding. The Grant funding purchased mulch which was spread by Master Gardener Volunteers. This community project has been an amazing collaboration between the following organizations: Boys and Girls Club-Lee and Mary Marquart Center, Eau Claire Area Master Gardener Volunteers, Chippewa Valley Builders Association, CVTC Residential Construction Program, Eau Claire Parks and Recreation Department, and FoodWise.



Margo Dieck | Health and Well-Being Educator



Collaborating with the Safe and Sober Spaces Task Force to plan for policy, systems, and environmental change around increasing the frequency and availability of substance free events/spaces/groups/establishments in Eau Claire County. The goal is to 'Improve mental health by providing opportunities for community connection.', and the specific objective is 'Support at least three strategies to increase community access to options for safe and sober spaces for socialization outside of work, school, and home, focusing on areas/communities with the largest gaps in access.'

Collaborating with the Youth Mental Health Task Force to plan for an equitable approach to increasing the amount of youth accessing mental health services in Eau Claire County. The goal is to 'Support youth mental health', and the specific objective is 'At least quarterly each year promote training, programs, and resources that equip families with knowledge, skills, and resources to support youth mental health focusing on youth most at risk'.

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.

The University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming in compliance with state and federal law.

Extension Eau Claire County

September 2025 Report

Co-Chairing the Eau Claire Health Alliance: Mental Health & Community Connectedness health priority area. The goal of this effort is to guide the work of two task forces, which are collaborative groups with specific and focused health improvement plans connected to objectives identified in the Community Health Improvement Plan. Current task force work is focused on youth mental health and safe and sober spaces in the community.

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 WeCOPE curriculum was written in 2021 and has been implemented widely across the state. A current evaluation of the program impact is underway and the WeCOPE facilitator team has identified necessary changes to incorporate adult learning principles, participant feedback, and educator requests. A team of educators and state specialists are gathering input from instructors and revising the curriculum. The product of this effort will result in a curriculum that supports consistent delivery by educators across the state, be more comprehensive in the tools and modifications necessary for unique audiences and will align with adult learning principles.

Positive Youth Development

Rachel Hart-Brinson | 4-H Program Educator



Planning for Juntos 4-H clubs at South and Delong Middle Schools in Eau Claire, including a "camp day" for families. This program is to build connections between parents and kids, teach leadership skills, and support academic success.

Annual Financial Report collection and review of 4-H club and group financials. Submission and review of annual financials are required to ensure compliance with 4-H policy and maintain status as a recognized 4-H entity.

Club visits with a presentation on the new WI 4-H Project Guide and a brief needs assessment along with distributing a QR code to a Needs Assessment Survey. The Needs Assessment will help me plan what kinds of programming people would like to participate in and therefore increase retention.

An in-person volunteer training for 4-H volunteers who struggle with technology. This training facilitates volunteers completing their training requirements and provides them with support they appreciate to keep them as enrolled volunteers.

Planning for a "game night" in partnership with a UW-Eau Claire Leadership class. This event would be an opportunity for club leadership teams and adult leaders to have fun together and learn some new games that they can use at their clubs.

Conversations with LE Phillips Memorial Library Youth Services staff to establish a way to provide joint programming. This required multiple conversations because of library policy regarding collection of demographic data that is required by Extension programs to comply with our Civil Rights obligations.

The University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming in compliance with state and federal law.

Extension Eau Claire County

September 2025 Report

Planning for a virtual baking program that is in its 6th year. This program explores culture and the art and science of baking. (Rachel Hart-Brinson, Andrea Rippley, April Daniels, Zachary Rozmiarek)

Updating the Eau Claire County 4-H Welcome Packet to share up-to-date information with interested families. This packet includes current descriptions of clubs, contact information for club leaders and project groups, and Eau Claire County policies.

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)

Planning for a Juntos Career Pathways Programs for Youth and Families in collaboration with local school districts and technical colleges. The goal is to provide families with career pathway information and build community between families, so that they are better able to prepare for their students' future career goals. (Adam Trunzo)

Planning, in partnership with Wisconsin Farmers Union and member farms, a farm tour for Hmong-speaking farmers to explore small-scale farm operations (ideally 5 acres or less) that differ from typical Hmong farming practices. The tour will highlight season extension techniques, post-harvest handling, infrastructure, wholesale market preparation, and sustainable practices (e.g., cover cropping). The goal is to increase awareness, knowledge, and interest in diverse small-farm models. (Addison Vang)

The University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming in compliance with state and federal law.