

A REPORT FROM THE  
**EXECUTIVE DEAN**  
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture  
November 2012

### **Animal Waste Management and Renewable Energy**

A pilot project is under way in Monmouth County to study feasibility of anaerobic digestion units for energy production and nutrient management. Cooperators include Animal Science Extension Specialist **Michael Westendorf**, NRCS, and Spectrum BioEnergy, a consortium offering eco-friendly solutions to organic waste and which provided the small anaerobic digester. This project places the first anaerobic digester on a small horse farm in the state and should provide information on improving the approval process for anaerobic digestion of animal waste.

### **Wildlife Damage**

Wildlife expert **Brooke Maslo** has been hired on a one-year appointment to reinvigorate education and research on wildlife damage. She will be coordinating efforts with agricultural agents and growers to continue work begun by the NJAES Wildlife Damage Control Center. In addition, she was recently awarded a USDA-NRCS CIG grant to investigate whether bats can impact brown marmorated stink bug predation on crops.

### **Bringhurst Closure Impacts Small Livestock Operations in New Jersey**

Many New Jersey farmers will be left with no place to process livestock following the closure and imminent sale of Bringhurst. A long battle with federal inspectors necessitated the hiring of one full time employee devoted solely to regulatory paperwork and multiple, daily check-point performance. Bringhurst processed approximately 1,500 beef plus other livestock each year for over 100 small growers. NJAES shares the concern of small growers in our state that require local processing facilities that can sustain operate under reasonable regulatory conditions.

### **Improving Soil Fertility and Disease Suppression**

Important research on silicon by Extension Specialist in soil fertility Joseph Heckman has resulted in recognition of silicon as a plant beneficial substance, which may now be listed in the guaranteed analysis section on fertilizer labels. Research done at the Snyder Research and Extension Farm showed that available silicon suppressed powdery mildew disease. Details are found in his publication, *The Soil Profile*, at <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/soilprofile/sp-v20.pdf>.

### **Cover Crops for Improving Soil Organic Matter**

A cooperative effort between USDA, NRCS, and Rutgers Cooperative Extension educated 50 growers and ag support personnel on soil disease suppression and soil moisture-holding capacity effects of cover crops on Coastal Plain soils. Specific cultural practices were discussed with enthusiastic audience participation.

### **Agricultural Education Programs**

Women farmers in New Jersey continue to benefit from the Rutgers Cooperative Extension and Annie's Project partnership. This month, two additional statewide training sessions have been scheduled and these will focus on farm accounting.

This report is available online at <http://execdeanagriculture.rutgers.edu/boa>.

