

# Farmers Warm Up to Soil Management Systems

**TROY BISHOPP**

Special to Lancaster Farming

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. — Southern tier farmers, ready for a warm reprieve from below-zero temperatures and wind chills, saw presentations on green cover crops and soil biology at a recent workshop.

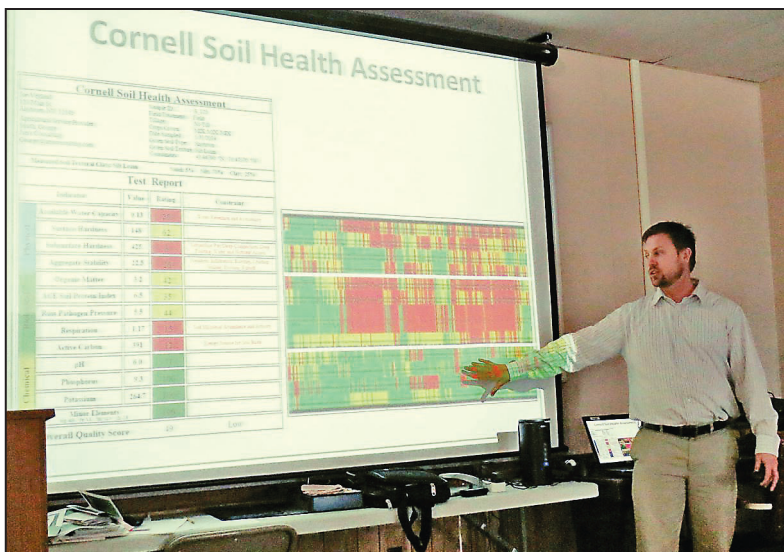
The Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District partnered with USDA-NRCS, the Cornell University Extension Soil Health Team, The Upper Susquehanna Coalition and local cover crop practitioners to showcase water-holding capacity of soils, winter cereals as cover crops, double cropping in corn, soil health testing tools, and management strategies by experienced farmers.

Olga Vargas, NRCS soil scientist, created the “ah-ha moments” for the audience as she showcased how soil biological “glues” and organic matter held soil in place while tilled soil clods dispersed in water.

“To improve soil health, disturb it less, plant cover crops, use plant diversity, grow living roots during the year and monitor your land by walking the fields when it rains to see how you’re doing,” Vargas said.

Quirine Ketterings, Cornell professor of nutrient management in agricultural systems, shared her latest research on the costs of double cropping with corn, nitrogen benefits of winter cereals and forage quality for dairy animals.

“Treat winter covers like a crop, not as an afterthought. If you want profitable results, you must commit to a strategic forage plan since timing is everything,” Ketterings said.



Photos provided by Troy Bishopp

Aaron Ristow, Cornell soil and crop science Extension associate, shows farmers how to interpret the Cornell soil health test.

Her research showed farmers getting 2-tons-per-acre yield of rye in May were looking for soil conservation, an increase in organic matter and to catch leftover nitrogen from the previous corn crop.

Aaron Ristow, newly appointed Cornell University soil and crop science Extension associate, showed farmers what the protocol was for taking a soil sample, and using the Cornell soil health test.

“We’ve been really good at gathering, studying and making fertilizer recommendations from the chemical properties of soils. We are now very interested in the biological and physical properties to implement a holistic approach to soil and crop management,” Ristow said. He also described how these soil management strategies are helping New

York meet the Chesapeake Bay’s TMDL “pollution diet.”

Michael Coryat, Otsego Soil and Water Conservation District conservation technician, gave a rundown of the Penn State no-till interseeder and applicator drill, which seeds cover crops between rows of foot-tall corn and also acts as a pasture renovator. He described how the implement could get cover crops in sooner, add nitrogen, and get a spring crop for plow-down, grazing or making silage.

Kevin Ganoe, Extension regional field crops specialist, used slides to chronicle the impacts of residue management, compaction, pests, low levels of soil life and corn planting through ground cover.

The workshop ended with a question-and-answer session featuring dairy farmers Luke Pullis of Roedale Farm in Richfield Springs and Josh Johnson of Muddy River Dairy



Olga Vargas, USDA-NRCS soil scientist, leads a water infiltration demonstration.

LLC in Otego, and beef cattle farmer Phil Hodgins of Oak Stone Farms in Fly Creek. They described their cover crop programs, seeding rates, per-acre costs, forage yields and the challenges in working around their busy schedules.

“Our goal was to raise local awareness and find common sense approaches to keeping the land covered and building a resilient, healthy

soil. This will prove to be beneficial in lessening our environmental footprint within our watershed and adding profitability to our farms,” said Jordan Clements, Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District manager.

For more information, contact the Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District at 607-547-8337.

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## NEW HOLLAND SALES STABLES INC. THE ACTION AUCTION

### Livestock Is Our Only Business!

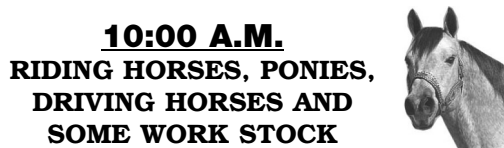
• Special Monthly Dairy Heifer Sale, Wed. March 11th •

#### MONDAY

7:30 A.M.

#### SLAUGHTER HOGS EARLY BIRD HOG SALE

Sell Your Hogs At New Holland Sales Stables, Inc.  
See them weighed, sold and pickup your check.



10:00 A.M.  
RIDING HORSES, PONIES,  
DRIVING HORSES AND  
SOME WORK STOCK

9:00 A.M. - SHEEP, GOATS

11:00 A.M.  
BEEF SALE

4:00 P.M. - CALVES

#### WEDNESDAY

10:30 A.M.

#### COW SALE FOLLOWED BY BULLS FOLLOWED BY HEIFERS



Loads of fresh cows and springers from our regular shippers.  
Also some local fresh cows and springers.  
200 Heifers Sell Every Week All Sizes & Ages Registered & Grades

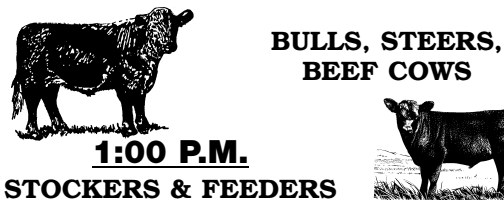
1:30 P.M.  
FEEDER PIG  
SALE

1st & 3rd Wednesdays of each month

Pigs are accepted after 6:30 A.M. State graded from 8 to 12.  
Dairy Barn and Feeder Pig Barn are cleaned and disinfected  
weekly for your protection.

#### THURSDAY

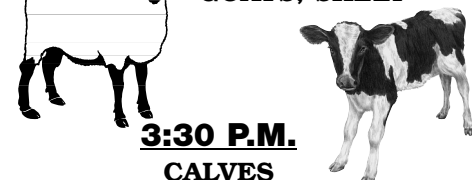
9:30 A.M.  
BEEF AUCTION



BULLS, STEERS,  
BEEF COWS

1:00 P.M.  
STOCKERS & FEEDERS

2:00 P.M.  
GOATS, SHEEP



3:30 P.M.  
CALVES

New Holland Sales Stables, Inc.

12 Miles East of Lancaster Off Route 23,  
New Holland, PA

David Kolb Manager 61L  
Sale Barn Office Manager:  
Michael J. McDermott - 717-354-4341  
FAX #717-355-0706

Order Buyer: Aaron Martin 717-445-4825

Field Representatives For Beef and Feeders:

Ron Ranck - 717-656-9849  
Jim Martin - 717-445-4063 Home  
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Field Representative For Sheep and Goats:

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#### Grain Bank Prices Week of 3/1/15

- Reduce out-of-pocket feed payments all year long
- Use any banked grain to pay for any blended feed
- Choice of back-haul or cash freight reimbursement

	Corn	Barley	Soybeans
Mount Joy	\$3.84	\$2.70	\$9.91
Martinsburg	\$3.84	\$2.70	\$9.91
Lebanon	\$3.84	\$2.70	\$9.91
Letterkenny	\$3.84	\$2.70	NA

All per bushel prices

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## VINTAGE SALES STABLES, INC.

#### MONDAY SALES

AT 11:30 AM  
SELLING HEIFERS,  
BULLS, STEERS,  
FEEDER &  
BUTCHER COWS  
CALVES 3:00 PM

#### TUESDAY SALES

12:30 P.M.  
SLAUGHTER CATTLE AUCTION  
STEERS, BULLS, HEIFERS,  
COWS, FEEDER CATTLE

4:30 P.M.  
CALVES, SHEEP, GOATS  
\*GET CALVES IN EARLY!  
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STARTS AT 10:30 A.M.

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