



Agricultural Resources Program
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The Agricultural Resources program in Belknap County provides research based information on soil science, integrated pest management, fruit and vegetable production, lawn care, pasture and hay land, nursery/bedding plant production and landscaping. Since moving to the Belknap County office in May, my focus has been on maintaining a strong presence with commercial agriculture as well as offering Belknap County citizens at large access to agricultural expertise.

As part of my work with the agricultural community, I have made on-site visits to most commercial agricultural operations. These visits have included crop surveys and recommendations to farmers on issues such as pest management, fertility management, and crop specific cultural care. As a result, I was able to identify key pest and crop issues that could significantly reduce crop yield and quality and make remedial recommendations. One key pest issue I addressed aggressively was late blight in tomato and potato. Tomatoes represent one of the top two crops Belknap farmers sell in terms of gross receipts. And they are an important crop, along with strawberry and sweet corn, which draws customers to roadside stands. Stand traffic is key to profitability for most Belknap County crop farms.

To address the late blight epidemic, I visited each farm growing tomatoes and potatoes personally to both survey fields and greenhouses for the disease and to give the latest control recommendations from Extension Plant Pathologist, Cheryl Smith. Follow-up visits to key sites were conducted at the request of growers concerned about plant symptoms. With one exception, Belknap County commercial growers were able to manage this potentially catastrophic disease issue with little loss of crop.

Weather related problems plagued most fruit growers and reduced hay yield and quality (protein content) significantly. On-site consultations with hay producers focused on proper nutrient management. Most hay fields visited were significantly low in potassium and recommendations to address this need were made. In addition, recommendations for new seedlings representing 60 acres of hay were made.


For fruit growers, the wet weather increased disease pressure dramatically compared to past years. Key issues addressed were the proper use of post-infection activity fungicides and proper timing of protectant fungicides.

Home owners in Belknap County experienced problems that were, as in commercial agriculture, primarily weather related. Home lawn diseases, late blight, poor seed germination, and a variety of pest issues were addressed when dealing with over 250 home owner requests and office visits. Several news paper articles dealing with home garden issues were written and published.

One community effort is with Meredith where I worked with the Parks and Recreation Department to identify invasive species and recommend remedial action for their elimination.

Highlights of Agricultural Resources Program Impacts, May – October, 2009

- Belknap County Agriculture Statistics
 - 270 farms
 - 23,378 acres in farms

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- \$7.668 million (value of products)
 - Commercial agriculture industry development
 - Work included approximately 65 site visits on commercial farms plus phone calls and e-mail contacts
 - Fruit pruning workshop attended by 45
 - Pasture Management Meeting attended by 24
 - Pesticide recertification credit offerings – 2 grower meetings
 - Pesticide safety education for new private applicators given to 16
 - Recommendations on site selection, pre-plant soil preparation, and variety selection were made for 1.5 acres of strawberry, 15 acres of mixed vegetable production, and 65 acres of hay
 - Recommendations for control of specific crop pests, nutrient management issues, and other crop management problems resulted in a savings to growers of approximately \$140,000
 - In addition, appropriate use of fertilizers reduced risk of surface and ground water pollution
 - Part-time farmers, home gardens and grounds
 - Over 500 phone, office visit, and e-mail contacts and site visits
 - 3 articles on garden problems in local papers