

BEYOND THE FENCE

VERMONT FARM BUREAU NEWSLETTER



AUGUST 2023



Foote Brook Farm, Johnson, Vermont

Flooding Impacts Felt Statewide

By Laura Hardie

The flooding that occurred in July across Vermont caused significant and devastating disruptions to many farms. The impact was unlike anything many farm owners had ever experienced in their lifetimes. Here's a look at how the floods affected several farms.

Foote Brook Farm, Johnson, Vermont

Two weeks after the flood, Joie Lehouillier, of [Foote Brook Farm](#) in Johnson, was on her way to Hunger Mountain Co-op in Montpelier with a delivery of cucumbers. The cucumbers were among the 25 percent of organic vegetables spared from flooding on the farm.

"We lost about 75 percent of our crops. The major thing for us is that we lost so much infrastructure. There was five to six feet of water in our barn that ruined packaging, forklifts, compressors, and all the things we need to continue to go on," Lehouillier said.

The farm's machinery was hit hard too. Eleven tractors, an excavator, and a bucket loader were all underwater. Lehouillier said the flood waters far surpassed the water levels during Hurricane Irene in 2011.

"We're in a lot of trouble for sure," Lehouillier said. "We're trying, and we have a lot of hope that we'll be able to get financial support. I don't know many farmers who have crop insurance. Even if you get it, it doesn't cover much. Most years, it's just another bill you get. Going forward, it's something we will look at. But it definitely wasn't going to save our lives."

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Flooding (continued from p.1)

Lahouillier says community support has kept them in business. Family members took time off from work to drain tractors and flush them, while crews removed flood debris from the buildings and land.

"We have tons of community support. If it wasn't for our community, we would have had to lay everyone off and shut our doors," Lahouillier said. "July is when we start being able to make money and sell the vegetables and pay off our loans we incur during the early season."

The farm's beet and squash crops were above water, and Lahouillier says that income is keeping them going for now.

"It's going to be tough next year without infrastructure. We don't have coolers right now. Even if we pick the beets, I don't know where we'll store them," Lahouillier said. "Everyone wants to give us a loan, but we have so much debt, we can't. Eventually, we will have to, but we can't consider it right now."

For those interested in supporting the farm, there is a recovery fund on their website, and Lahouillier says every bit helps.

"Come to the farmstand and shop and keep farms in the forefront of your mind," Lahouillier said. "We aren't confident federal help is coming, so if our state and communities can help us, we'll make it. Otherwise, we'll have a lot fewer farms, and that will be really sad."

Cate Farm, Plainfield, Vermont

Flint Wiswall, of [Cate Farm](#) in Plainfield, Vermont, woke up the morning of July 11 to the sound of water lapping outside his bedroom.

"It's the most water I've ever seen in my life. I paddled through the covered bridge and over my burdock field that was under 15 feet of water," Wiswall said.

The burdock root was intended for local cooperatives, herbal companies, and Whole Foods. The flood waters covered it too long for it to survive, and it was a 100 percent loss. The farm's barn also flooded along with two pieces of machinery.



Wiswall has crop insurance through FSA and will get some relief, though it won't cover the full expense to replace the 1.5-acre burdock field. Luckily, the farm's greenhouses were all on higher ground and not impacted by the flood, and so the vast majority of their organic plants and produce were unscathed.

"My Dad has been farming for 42 years, and I've been co-managing for the past seven years, and this year he finally retired, and I took over, and I was like, 'Oh, this is an interesting way to take on a business.' I've been talking with other farmers and they're like, 'Well, this is the worst thing that could possibly happen, so it can only go up from here,'" Wiswall said, "and hopefully, that is true."

White Rock Farm, Randolph, Vermont

Matt Angell, of White Rock Farm in Randolph, Vermont, lost about 20 acres of corn at their 140-cow dairy farm because it was knocked over by the flood, as well as 20 acres of hay, which they harvested and composted.

"The corn that got knocked over is starting to come back, but I don't think it's going to be a viable crop," Angell said. "That's about 25 percent of our corn crop."

Angell has been discussing with his feed dealer what to do about the corn fields that were flooded, but not knocked over, "We think we have enough good corn to dilute out the silted corn we do end up harvesting. The hope is because it hadn't made an ear yet, it won't be too bad."

Though they didn't have crop insurance on their 80 acres of corn, Angell says they'll be okay, "We try not to have our eggs in one basket. We run a sawmill and sell horse hay. I have enough feed that it will be all right. Our loss will be easier to weather than a lot of other people's."

Boyden Farm, Cambridge Vermont

Mark Boyden, of [Boyden Farm](#) in Cambridge, Vermont, says while they had extensive damage to many of their crop fields, he's grateful their beef farm wasn't hit harder.

"I have crop insurance on the corn and the soybean crops at 70 percent, so it's better than nothing but still a hit," Boyden said.

Boyden also lost fields of barley and rye intended for distillers along with hay fields that were ready for second cut.

"The Agency of Ag is offering some funding," Boyden said. "It's minor compared to the damages that aren't covered by insurance, but it's better than zero. We're just grateful our buildings and cattle weren't hit. We're okay compared to people who had houses that were in the flood or all of their vegetable fields in the flood. We'll get through this."

Staff Updates at Vermont Farm Bureau

Amber Perry Now Admin & Policy Director

There have been some recent changes at the state office. Tommy O'Connor is no longer with us at Vermont Farm Bureau. He was offered an opportunity he couldn't say no to, and we wish him well in his future endeavors.

Amber Perry is now serving as Administrative and Policy Director at Vermont Farm Bureau. Amber lives in East Montpelier with her family. Amber's daughters are very involved in 4H, and when she is not working, you can normally find her at a dairy cattle show. As a family, they are passionate about agriculture and advocate for supporting local farms!

As always, you can reach Amber by phone at 802-498-5140, or email her at ambervtfb@gmavt.net.



Welcome Kate Rowley, Northern Field Rep.



Kate Rowley is the new Field Representative for the Northern part of the state! She is currently serving Addison, Caledonia, Chittenden, Franklin, Essex, Grand Isle, Lamoille, Orleans, and Washington Counties.

Her passion for agriculture began at an early age on her family's dairy farm located in Milton, Vermont. She continued to follow her passion through college as part of the FARMS 2+2 Scholarship Program, where she studied Dairy Farm Management, Animal Sciences, and Community Entrepreneurship. Throughout her college career, she began to truly value the importance of agriculture advocacy and communication between farmers and consumers. That strong passion led her to want to be part of the Vermont Farm Bureau team!

Fun Fact: When Kate is not in the barn, she enjoys being outdoors and taking walks with her dog!

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Eliza Schraver

Addison, Bennington, Orange, Rutland, Windham, and Windsor Counties

Beyond the Fence is published by the Vermont Farm Bureau. The editor welcomes contributions on agricultural topics and news about Farm Bureau activities and members.

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Vermont Farm Bureau Staff Spotlight

Eliza Schraver, Southern Field Rep.

Eliza Schraver is our field representative for the counties of Addison, Bennington, Orange, Rutland, Windham and Windsor.

Eliza graduated from SUNY Cobleskill in 2015 with a bachelor's degree in animal science and has spent the last few years traveling around the northeast working for DairyOne testing milk. She comes from a strong dairy background and currently raises a herd of Nubian Dairy Goats. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, kayaking and backpacking throughout New York and Vermont.



A Note from Kristen Burns, Office Manager

Hello,

My name is Kristen Burns, I am the Vermont Farm Bureau Office Manager supporting agriculture and farmers in the state of Vermont. A few things I enjoy doing are being outside in nature; hiking, camping, and capturing beautiful Vermont landscape photos. With a background of working with children, I enjoy trying new things which is why I entered the agriculture industry to learn more about agriculture in the state of Vermont. I am fortunate to have the opportunity to work for the Vermont Farm Bureau, support our members, and increase my administrative experience. I am looking forward to meeting more of our members and growing the company.

Kristen Burns can be reached at the state office Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m.

If you have any questions about membership or need assistance with benefits, please reach out to her either by phone at 802-434-5646 or by email at kristenvtfb@gmavt.net.





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Vermont Farm Bureau in the Field

Some of our team spent some time in Ohio recently at **Nationwide's Best Effective Sales Techniques (BEST) training**. While they were there, they were able to brainstorm new ways to increase membership, member engagement, and build connections with seven other state Farm Bureaus. They are excited to be back and ready to share what they have learned with the counties.



Above left to right: Kate Rowley, Northern Field Representative, Eliza Schraver, Southern Field Representative, Amber Perry, Administrative & Policy Director.



Left: Eliza Schraver (far right) with the Best in Show winners, the Kaeser family.

On Saturday, June 17th, our Southern Field Representative Eliza Schraver assisted the **Southern Vermont Dairy Goat Association** in hosting their American Dairy Goat Sanctioned Show. Around 200 dairy goat breeders attended from all over the Northeast and New England. It is a great way to showcase the wonderful area of Southern Vermont. The Southern Vermont Dairy Goat Association was founded in 1945 in Chester, Vermont at that time, goat clubs already existed in Central and Northern Vermont. Six years later, the SVDGA became incorporated in the State of Vermont as an educational organization. They now currently own a lovely clubhouse in Marlboro, Vermont and host meetings, events, and shows throughout the year. Congratulations to the Best in Show winners, Craig and Jane Kaeser of Connecticut with their Senior Lamancha doe and Nora Strawbribe of Maine with her Junior Oberhasli doe. If interested in learning more about the history of dairy goats in Vermont, feel free to visit their website at www.vtgoats.com

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Open Farm Day at Newmont Farm Draws 1,500+ Visitors

On June 3rd, the Gladstone family hosted their 7th Annual Open Farm Event. The family estimates that they have between 1,500 to 1,800 attendees each year. The main drive behind opening their farm up to their community is to allow people onto the dairy farm to see and learn what takes place on a farm. This also helps clarify any misinformation. Each year the family tries to add something new to the event. This year the soil tent was a huge hit.

The Fairlee Fire Department is on-site cooking up hot dogs to serve the crowd for lunch. There is always a never-ending supply of samples of Cabot Creamery products, and of course, there is plenty of milk and ice cream too.

The community has embraced this event, and it is something that many look forward to attending yearly.

Over the years, Newmont Farm has diversified. They are currently milking 1,700 cows and offer farm-raised pork and beef. This year they have planted 300 acres of pumpkins.

The family recognizes that the heart and soul of their farm lies in the hands of their 30 employees. They also know that their annual open farm would not be possible if it wasn't for those that are willing to step in and lend a helping hand.

Vermont Farm Bureau had a great time helping at Newmont Farm Annual Open Farm, and we are looking forward to helping again next year. We hope to see you there!



Top: Vermont Farm Bureau L to R: Amber Perry, Eliza Schraver, Joe Tisbert. Bottom left: Walt Gladstone gives a wagon tour of the farm. Bottom right: Senator Robert Starr tries his hand at milking a mechanical cow.

Breakfast on the Farm at Sunderland Farm Draws 1,400+ Visitors

On August 5th, Sunderland Farm hosted the 9th annual Vermont Breakfast on the Farm for 1,400 people. Free breakfast included donuts, yogurt, granola, sausage, blueberries, cheese, and maple syrup, as well as milk and coffee.

Sunderland Farm has been caring for the land in Bridport since the mid-19th century when sheep grazed their pastures. A sixth-generation dairy farm, Sunderland Farm was originally purchased in 1860 and was home to Merino sheep. The farm made the switch from sheep to dairy in the late 1800s.

The farm continued to pass through the generations until it reached Harold and Larry Sunderland's parents, Lyle and Grace. Brothers Harold and Larry purchased the farm from their parents in 1977 and established Rolling Acres Farm. In 2015, after working on the farm for several years, Larry's son, Robert (Bob), expressed interest in becoming an owner. He bought out his father's half of the herd, and Robert and Bob formed a new corporation known as Sunderland Farm Inc. Sunderland Farm currently leases the land, buildings, and some of the machinery from Rolling Acres. This is just one example of how farmers are finding ways to transition farm ownership from one generation

to the next, ensuring they'll continue to produce nutritious milk for many years to come.

Sunderland Farm was named the 2020 Vermont Dairy Farm of the Year. They milk over 200 cows, shipping to the Dairy Farmers of America Cooperative in St. Albans, Vermont. The Sunderland's have invested in ongoing measures to improve cow comfort, including computer-assisted robotic milkers, robotic barn cleaners and feed pushers, rotary brushes, cyclone fans, barn curtains, and more.



Sunderland Farm in Bridport hosted Vermont on the Farm on Saturday, August 5th for 1,400 people.

Legislative Update

On June 20th, the legislators returned to the State House for a quick veto session.

The House quickly overrode H.217(Act76) - an act relating to child care, early education, workers' compensation, and unemployment insurance. They also overrode the Budget on a vote of yes-105 to no 42, and H.305- an act relating to professions and occupations regulated by the Office of Professional Regulations on a vote of 109 -yes to 38-no. They also overrode H.386 (Act M-15)- an act relating to the approval of amendments to the Charter of the Town of Brattleboro, which will allow youth voters to vote in certain Town elections. They also overrode H.509 (Act M-16)- an act relating to the approval of amendments to the voter qualification provisions of the charter of the City of Burlington. This would allow the City of Burlington to allow residents who are not U.S. citizens to vote in City and Burlington School District elections.

The Senate opted to let the vetoes on S.6- an act relating to law enforcement interrogation policies, and on S.39- an act relating to compensation and benefits for members of the Vermont General Assembly. While their pay raises did not go through this year, I am sure we will see it back on the table next year.



Also, please note that H.126(Act 59)- an act relating to community resilience and biodiversity protection, is also referred to as conserving 30% of land by 2030 and 50% by 2050. There will be a total of at least 12 meetings around this bill, three of which will be open to public comment from the general public. As we learn the dates of these meetings, we will share them with you.



SAVE THE DATE

Farm Bureau Annual Meeting

NOVEMBER 3 & 4

**Burke Mountain
East Burke , VT**



Events and Resources

Vermont Ag Hall of Fame



On Wednesday, August 30th, the following will be inducted into the Vermont Ag Hall of Fame for 2023. Congrats to all the inductees!

- **Emerging Leader** -Andy Birch, Farmer, Derby
- **Ag Innovator** -Jed Davis, Agri-Mark VP Strategic Engagement & Sustainability, South Burlington
- **Lifetime Achievement**
 - Richard Lawrence, Legislator, Farmer, Lyndonville
 - Diane Bothfeld, Former Director of Agriculture Development, Cabot
 - Jake Guest, Organic farmer. Fairlee, VT



May 2023 Frost Event USDA Disaster

USDA designated the state as a natural disaster area for the May 2023 frost event. Federal disaster relief aid has been made available for those that were impacted by the frost event in May. Vermont farms that were damaged by the frost in May can apply for relief aid in the form of emergency loans. You need to report your frost damage to your local FSA office, this must be done to access the aid. Governor Phil Scott has also made a request to Secretary Vilsack seeking a USDA disaster declaration from the recent flooding event, the request is still pending.



New Classified Section!

We would like to offer a section of our newsletter for classifieds. If you have an item that you are looking for, looking to sell, or are in need of some farm labor please feel free to send in the requests, and we will make sure we publish them. Please note our newsletters go out quarterly. You can send in your requests to kristenvtfb@gmavt.net, or call them in at 802-434-5646.

Severe Weather & Flooding Survey

The Agency of Agriculture is seeking information from the Vermont farms that were impacted by the recent severe weather and flooding that transpired in July. They are requesting that businesses, organizations, or individuals who raise animals, grows feed or crops for anyone beyond their immediate family, to fill out the survey. The survey is estimated to take 5 to 10 minutes. The Agency of Agriculture will compile the information to help with future relief and recovery programs. [Click here to complete VAAFM's Loss & Damage Survey](#) or go to www.shorturl.at/nBX48.

Fairs & Field Days

Deerfield Valley Farmers Day	August 10-13, 2023	Wilmington, VT
Addison County Fair & Field Day	August 8-12, 2023	New Haven, VT
Vermont State Fair	August 15-19, 2023	Rutland, VT
Caledonia County Fair	August 23-27, 2023	Lyndonville, VT
Bondville Fair	August 25-27, 2023	Bondville, VT
Champlain Valley Exposition	August 25-Sep 3, 2023	Essex Junction, VT
Guilford Fair	September 3-4, 2023	Guilford, VT
Orleans County Fair	September 6-10, 2023	Barton, VT
The Tunbridge World's Fair	September 14-17, 2023	Tunbridge, VT



Events and Resources

Prevent Hay Bale Fires with Year-Round Vigilance

*The following information is provided by Nationwide®, the #1 farm and ranch insurer in the U.S.**

Hundreds of barn fires happen every year in the U.S, and in many of them, hay bales are the fuel source for what's almost always a major property loss that also can endanger livestock and farm workers.

Hay bale fires can happen from the day the bales are made until they're used, regardless of the forage type or quality.



In most cases, wet hay is actually more likely to catch fire or spontaneously combust than dry hay. Hay fires are a unique, costly hazard that calls for year-round attention, according to Nationwide Risk Management Consultant, agronomist and Iowa farmer Derek Hommer.

“Hay bale fires are just one type that contributes to fire being the leading cause of farm claims and losses,” Hommer said. “That’s why it’s so important pay close attention to nearby heat sources, hay moisture and bale quality. They all contribute to how hay catches fires and potential spontaneous combustion.”

Why does wet hay catch on fire?

When harvested at a higher moisture level, a forage crop sometimes stays damp and respire well after baling. That continued respiration in the presence of oxygen after it's baled creates conditions that can cause bales to spontaneously combust. Wet hay that continues to respire can generate heat and eventually spontaneously combust.

After hay is baled and stored at higher moisture levels, the fire risk from spontaneous combustion is greatest in the first two to six weeks. And that risk continues if hay bales are stored where moisture can linger, like a barn with a leaky roof or high-humidity area.

Hay placed in storage should have a moisture content under 25%, according to a report from the Pennsylvania State University Agriculture and Biological Engineering Department. Higher levels of moisture require an oxygen-limiting storage system. The heat generated by the crop plus the presence of oxygen increases the risk of a fire.

Key times to think about hay bale fire prevention

Hommer recommends the following best practices throughout the growing season to minimize hay bale fire risk, especially from spontaneous combustion once bales are stored:

- **Harvesting.** Harvest forage within the optimal moisture range and allow adequate drying time in the field before baling.
- **Conditioning.** Mower conditioners, tedders and rakes can speed hay drying but can also harm leaf retention and crop quality.
- **Baling.** Bale hay up to 20% moisture to reduce the potential for hay bales spontaneously combusting or spoiling.
- **Storing.** Since moisture contributes to bale heating and fires, store hay under a roof to keep it as dry as possible. Hay probes and sensors like in the HAYTECH platform helps monitor temperatures in stored hay that can help prevent hay fires or spontaneously combusting bales.

Visit [AgInsightCenter.com](https://www.aginsightcenter.com) for more resources and expert tips on trending topics to help you run a successful business and maintain the safety of your operation.

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Events and Resources

Lamoille County Farm Bureau Event

This year the Lamoille County Farm Bureau tried something new to engage with their community at the Lamoille County Field Days, which took place July 21st - July 23rd.

The Lamoille County Farm Bureau designed custom shirts with a slogan that best fit their motto and applied to their members, "If you eat, YOU belong in Farm Bureau."

Those that purchased t-shirts had the opportunity to make the shirts their own, with the option to tie-die for free! With the off-and-on rain showers that weekend, it was the perfect indoor activity!

The shirts were available in all sizes, ranging from toddler to adult, which adds even more meaning to the idea that everyone can and should be part of Vermont Farm Bureau.

Our farmers need consumer support to be able to continue to farm, and in return, our consumers need our farmers to continue to provide nutritious and affordable products for their consumption. We need each other. So the saying remains true, "If you eat, YOU belong in Farm Bureau!"

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Grand Isle County Farm Bureau Event

On Saturday, July 29th, the Grand Isle County Farm Bureau hosted their annual "Scoopathon" event, offering delicious Island Homemade Ice Cream by donation at the historic Hyde Log Cabin located in Grand Isle. In previous years, the proceeds have gone toward the local food shelf, which was the plan this year as well, until the devastating flood that impacted so many Vermonters shifted their gears toward donating the proceeds toward a flood relief fund.

The team stayed strong as it continued to rain Saturday afternoon during the "Scoopathon" event. The ice cream scooping team took that as a sign that they were donating their funds to the right cause. With that being said, the Grand Isle County Farm Bureau would like to do this event for a second time this summer and continue to raise money for local flood relief.



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