

Department of Agriculture



At a Glance

STEVEN K. REVICZKY, Commissioner

Established 1925

Statutory authority CGS Sec. 22-1

Central office - 165 Capitol Avenue

Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Average number of full-time employees – 62

Recurring operating expenses – \$6,038,516

Capital purchases - \$15,489

Organizational structure – Office of the Commissioner, Bureau of Regulation and Inspection, Bureau of Agricultural Development and Resource Preservation, Bureau of Aquaculture, Connecticut Marketing Authority, with Business Office and Human Resource Support from the Department of Administrative Services and legal services provided by the Office of the Attorney General.

Mission

The mission of the Department of Agriculture is to foster a healthy economic, environmental and social climate for agriculture by developing, promoting and regulating agricultural businesses; protecting agricultural and aquacultural resources; enforcing laws pertaining to public health, animal health and animal care; and promoting an understanding among the state's citizens of the diversity of Connecticut's agriculture, its cultural heritage and its contribution to the state's economy.

Statutory Authority

Statutory authority for the Department of Agriculture is found in Sections 12, 22, 26 and other sections of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Public Service

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture worked during FY 2013-14 to facilitate the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development, with Commissioner Reviczky chairing the council and agency staff providing administrative support to the council itself and its 16 working groups. From July 1, 2013, to June 30, 2014, it continued its unprecedented strategic planning effort to grow Connecticut farms, with stakeholder input from Connecticut's diverse agricultural community.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture continued during FY 2013-14 to inform the public; media representatives; and local, state, and federal government officials about various aspects of Connecticut agriculture through its Connecticut Weekly Agricultural Report, news releases, interviews, and radio and television appearances featuring Commissioner Reviczky and other key agency staff.

The Department, through the Bureau of Regulation and Inspection, continued the process of updating its traditional licensing system to the e-license system. Approximately 80% of the agency's licenses, permits and product registrations are now accessible in the elicense system. The elicense system provides a web based interface available to the public in which the status of licenses can be determined and lists of licenses and permits can be downloaded facilitating access to information that would otherwise only be available to the public by submitting a more time consuming request pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act.

BUREAU OF AQUACULTURE

The Department's Bureau of Aquaculture (DA/BA) is the designated State Shellfish Authority for the State of Connecticut, which participates in the National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP) as a shellfish producing State. The NSSP is the federal/state cooperative program recognized by the U. S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC) for the sanitary control of shellfish produced and sold for human consumption. The purpose of the NSSP is to promote and improve the sanitation of shellfish (oysters, clams, mussels and scallops) moving in interstate commerce through federal/state cooperation and uniformity of State shellfish programs. Environmental Analysts working in the Shellfish Program participate in all aspects of the national program, including the Shellfish Growing Area and Shellfish Plant Standardization Programs.

Three staff members of the Bureau of Aquaculture attended the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference biennial meeting in San Antonio, TX January 25-31, 2014. The ISSC was formed in 1982 to foster and promote shellfish sanitation through the cooperation of state and federal control agencies, the shellfish industry, and the academic community. The ISSC adopts

uniform procedures that are incorporated into an Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Program, and implemented by all shellfish control agencies; gives state shellfish programs current and comprehensive sanitation guidelines to regulate the harvesting, processing, and shipping of shellfish; provides a forum for shellfish control agencies, the shellfish industry, and academic community to resolve major issues concerning shellfish sanitation; informs all interested parties of recent developments in shellfish sanitation and other major issues of concern through the use of news media, publications, regional and national meetings, internet, and by working closely with academic institutions and trade associations. Bureau Director, David Carey, was elected the Region 2 Regulatory Representative at this year's meeting. Bureau staff have been appointed to several important committees and workgroups involved in policy-making at the national level.

The Bureau of Aquaculture hosted the Northeast Shellfish Sanitation Association (NESSA) annual meeting February 27-28, 2014. Bureau Director David Carey was the Association's President for 2014. Topics covered at this year's meeting were the 2013 *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* outbreak, *Vibrio* control plans in the northeast region, ISSC updates, and Model Ordinance changes. The meeting included representatives from industry, scientists and researchers, and regulators from state and federal agencies, and was hailed as a very timely and pertinent regional meeting by attendees.

Bureau of Aquaculture Accomplishments:

- Collected and analyzed over 6,500 seawater samples for fecal coliform bacteria, examined 133 phytoplankton samples for harmful algal blooms, 14 samples for paralytic shellfish poisoning, 133 shellfish tissues for fecal coliform bacteria analysis, 16 shellfish tissue samples tested for total *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* and total *Vibrio vulnificus*. In addition, 67 shellfish tissue, municipal wastewater, and seawater samples were analyzed for MSC (Male-Specific Coliphage) levels, used to evaluate viral impacts.
- The Bureau of Aquaculture conducted a hydrographic dye dilution study of two of the three municipal wastewater treatment plants on the Housatonic River with assistance from the FDA and the EPA's New England Regional Laboratory in May 2014. The study tracked the dispersion and dilution of wastewater discharging into the Housatonic River and Long Island Sound from the Stratford and Milford Housatonic Water Pollution Control Facilities (WPCFs). Rhodamine WT dye was released from the Stratford and Milford Housatonic WPCFs. Shellfish were deployed in cages for several weeks and analyzed for bacterial and viral indicators.
- Information collected during this study will be used by the DA/BA to evaluate the impact of wastewater discharges on shellfish growing areas in Milford and Stratford, and results will be used to determine where shellfish may be safely harvested, potentially upgrade shellfish growing area classification and aid in management of the River. Additionally, data collected during this study will be used by the FDA in their ongoing efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of WPCFs in eliminating bacterial and viral contaminants from wastewater, and how these discharges impact shellfish growing areas with respect to

dilution of these microbial contaminants. All three of the Lower Housatonic WPCFs, including the Stratford facility and two Milford facility have been upgraded to ultraviolet disinfection in recent years, which has proven to be effective treatment against bacteria and viruses contained in sewage, and does not require the introduction of chemicals into the waters of Long Island Sound.



Figure 1. Dye release from the Stratford Housatonic Wastewater Pollution Control Facility during the May 2014 Hydrographic Dye Dilution Study.

- The Bureau of Aquaculture completed Twelve Year Shoreline Pollution Source Surveys in the Town of Greenwich, the City of Milford, Town of Stratford and the Town of Waterford. Data collected during the surveys is used to compile a Comprehensive Pollution source GIS database, with the goal of having a comprehensive pollution source database for the entire CT shoreline. Pollution sources (such as sewage infiltration to stormwater outfalls) discovered during the surveys are investigated to determine where the contamination is originating and are referred back to the town for correction. Investigation of these sources requires a cooperative effort between the Bureau of Aquaculture, town health officials, public works departments, local environmental groups, and US Environmental Protection Agency.
- The Bureau of Aquaculture continued to expand the use of testing shellfish, seawater, and municipal wastewater effluent samples to determine levels of Male-Specific Coliphage (MSC). MSC is an indicator organism that has been accepted by the NSSP for detecting levels of enteric viruses that may be present in growing areas or shellfish tissues. Coliphages are bacterial viruses that infect and replicate in *Escherichia coli*, and are often found in high concentrations in municipal wastewater and to a lesser degree in human and animal feces. Because traditional bacterial monitoring does not accurately indicate the presence of non-bacterial organisms such as human pathogenic viruses, coliphages

are potentially important microorganisms for monitoring the microbial quality of waters and shellfish. It also provides a safe way for staff to assess impacts from pathogenic viruses such as the Norovirus by using the MSC as an indicator organism. Because human virus detection can be expensive and beyond the capabilities of most water laboratories, MSC testing provides a relatively easy way to test for human pathogenic viruses in a timely fashion. MSC has been shown to be present in municipal wastewater treatment facility sewage influent but testing at Connecticut facilities has shown that coliphage levels are effectively controlled by advanced disinfection; in particular ultraviolet disinfection has been shown to be particularly effective at reducing coliphage levels in effluent.

- Staff performed sanitary and record inspections of the 97 shellfish harvest vessels, 40 harvest operations and 28 wholesale dealer/distributors on a biennial basis as minimally required by the NSSP and during follow-up inspections throughout the year.
- Issued 69 Conch Licenses and 174 Personal Seed Oyster Licenses and 40 Seed Boat Licenses.

***Vibrio parahaemolyticus* Control Plan for Connecticut**

- During the summers of 2012 and 2013, *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* infections of a strain previously traced only to the Pacific Northwest were associated with consumption of oysters and other shellfish from several Atlantic Coast harvest areas¹. These infections were caused by the bacteria *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* which are naturally occurring in salt water. There are a number of species of *Vibrio*, including *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, that cause wound infections via environmental exposure to waters that contain the bacteria or gastrointestinal illness via consumption of shellfish. Gastrointestinal illnesses are often associated with the consumption of raw or undercooked shellfish, or with bacteria spread by cross-contamination between raw and cooked foods.
- Connecticut growing waters were the source of at least 23 confirmed cases of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* during the summer of 2013, with another additional 15 cases potentially linked to Connecticut waters. This outbreak occurred with a *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* Control Plan in place which limited time from harvest to refrigeration to 5 hours. The 5 hour limit was not adequate to prevent the 2013 outbreak from occurring, and a more stringent control plan was required in the outbreak area during 2014. Prior to 2013, only sporadic cases had been linked to Connecticut growing areas.
- The 2014 *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* Control Plan for the outbreak area was formulated with guidance of national experts in *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* and seafood safety. These experts were brought to Connecticut in December of 2013 to speak to Connecticut's industry and visited oyster producers in the field to offer specific guidance to our producers. These experts along with DA/BA staff gave presentations at the industry

meeting to explain the science and rationale behind controls related to reducing the risk of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* illness.

- During 2014, a *five hour* *Vibrio* control plan was implemented for the majority of shellfish growing areas in Connecticut. These controls requires a five hour limit from *time of harvest* to temperature control (either mechanical refrigeration *or icing*), shading shellfish on the deck of harvest boats, spraying shellfish with water from approved growing areas to keep them cool, monitoring of shellstock temperatures once on board, and reducing internal temperatures of shellfish to less than 50°F within 5 hours of placing under temperature control. Additionally there are new temperature record keeping *and documentation* requirements that must be adhered to by harvesters and dealers.
- The 2014 *Westport, Norwalk, and Darien Vibrio control plan* requires that all oysters harvested from these areas be immediately placed into an on-vessel ice slurry, or other method of rapid cooling Approved of by the Bureau of Aquaculture, and that the rapid cooling method be capable of reducing the internal temperature of oysters to <50° within one hour of harvest or other approved time frame. The *Vibrio control plan for the Westport, Norwalk, Darien growing area* also includes the general controls outlined in the *state-wide Vibrio control plan*. The Bureau of Aquaculture has approved rapid cooling methods for six harvesters in the Westport Norwalk and Darien growing area and has also approved rapid cooling methods for three harvesters working in areas with a five hour harvest limit.
- The Bureau of Aquaculture continues to work with aquaculture producers to ensure an understanding of the new regulations as well as educate harvesters that the warmer waters and unseasonable weather patterns must be considered while adopting strategies to eliminate the possibility of shellfish-related illnesses. Bureau analysts have spent many hours on-board harvest vessels during 2014 evaluating rapid cooling processes and making recommendations to improve existing controls. The ultimate goal is to reduce the risk of illness associated with Connecticut shellfish, in order to ensure that our shellfish industry continues to produce a high quality and safe source of shellfish for Connecticut residents and out-of-state consumers.

Environmental Monitoring for *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* in Long Island Sound

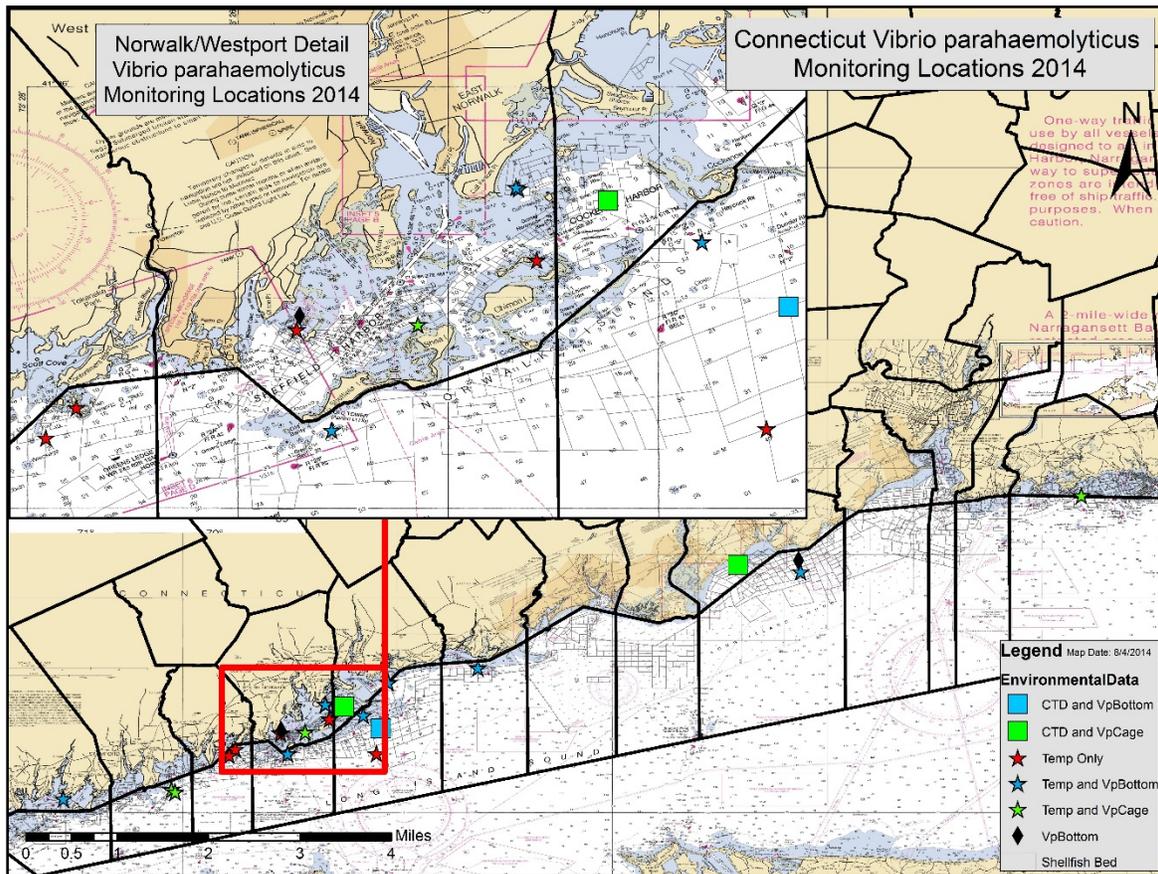


Figure 2. Nautical chart of Long Island Sound showing the sample and monitoring equipment locations for the 2014 *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* Monitoring Program.

- In order to gain a better understanding of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* levels and their relevance to implementing meaningful *Vibrio* controls in Connecticut growing waters, the 2014 DA/BA monitoring plan includes the collection of environmental parameters such as water temperature, air temperature, salinity and depth that may correlate to levels of *Vibrio* bacteria in shellfish. In addition, post-harvest time and temperature controls currently in place as required by the Connecticut 2014 *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* Control Plans will be evaluated by using continuous temperature data loggers (ACR Smart Button) to determine the effectiveness of post-harvest temperature controls and correlate these controls to quantifiable impacts on *Vibrio* levels. See Figure 2 for 2014 *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* monitoring program locations.
- In 2013, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture Bureau of Aquaculture (DA/BA) acquired quantitative Polymerase Chain Reaction (qPCR) technology (Life Technologies

7500 Fast Real Time PCR System) which will allow the DA/BA in their role as the State Shellfish Authority to conduct environmental monitoring for total Vp, tdh+ and trh+ indicators at a statewide scale. The monitoring plan is the first comprehensive environmental monitoring plan for Vibrio bacteria in the Connecticut waters of Long Island Sound and was implemented beginning in July of 2013.

- Real time Vibrio monitoring and continuous environmental observations will be used to inform our understanding of the temporal variability and spatial distribution of Vp in LIS growing areas. This data may provide an early warning system and allow the DA/BA to proactively manage risk of illness by limiting harvest from specific locations or requiring more stringent controls under certain environmental conditions.
- The Bureau of Aquaculture was awarded funding through the FDA Office of Partnerships to purchase equipment for environmental monitoring in support of the growing area classification and *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* Control Program (VPCP) portions of the program. Partnership funds were approved for the purchase of remote weather stations, stream flow meters, temperature data loggers and associated software, waterproof GPS enabled cameras, YSI salinometers, and plankton nets. This specialized equipment will be used to expand the collection of environmental data such as air and water temperatures and internal shellfish temperatures so that data can be collected on a continuous basis.

2014 *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* Illnesses

- Thus far in 2014, the DA/BA has received only sporadic reports of Vp illnesses attributed to CT shellfish, and no confirmed single-source Vp cases in which CT shellfish were the sole shellfish consumed. As of the first week of September, illness reports appear to be increasing in surrounding states, although the total number of reported illnesses remain low at this time. One CT resident has become ill from Vp after consuming shellfish out-of-state.
- The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries enacted a precautionary closure of Katama Bay in Edgartown (V:20) on September 3, 2014, due to *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* illnesses tied to oysters harvested from that growing area. The New York Department of Environmental Conservation has enacted an emergency closure of shellfish growing area NS-3/Town of Huntington effective September 5, 2014 due to documented *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* illnesses tied to shellfish harvested from those waters.
- At this time, the total number of Vp illnesses linked to shellfish consumption being reported in the Northeast at this time is low compared to recent years, however water temperatures were significantly lower early in the season than is normal, and the summer

in general has been unusually mild in the Northeast. The combination of favorable environmental conditions and *Vibrio* controls may be contributing to this apparent reduction in the rate of illness, although there may be additional factors at work.

BUREAU OF REGULATION AND INSPECTION

At the request of OPM the Bureau participated in a LEAN Kaizen in an effort to streamline the permitting and inspection process for firms regulated by the Bureau. The most significant item identified was the Bureau's need to adopt and use technology. Currently inspections are paper based. With the adoption of technology the Bureau hopes to move to a "paperless" model similar to what other states currently use. The Department hopes to secure funding to make the transition and the leap into 21st century technology. If the Department is successful it means that staff will have access to information in real time while in the field. Management and supervisors will have access to detailed information regarding violations and productivity. Reports necessary for FDA and USDA audits of our programs will be easily generated. Additionally our small staff will be able to initiate and complete inspections and investigations more efficiently, with fewer errors and more effectively enforce animal welfare and food safety law.

- The bureau issued \$5,582,691 in Dairy Sustainability Grants to 126 dairy farms pursuant to the provisions of Public Act 09-229.
- The Animal Population Control Program (APCP) issued 4,939 vouchers (3121 dogs/1818 cats) for the vaccination and sterilization of dogs/cats from municipal impound facilities, feral cat organizations and pets owned by low-income CT residents. Dog and cat sterilization vouchers were provided for 3,494 animals (2187 dogs/70% and 1307 cats/72%) for a 71% overall voucher redemption rate. In addition, 6,988 pre-surgical vaccination vouchers were distributed of which one-half were rabies vaccinations.
- Complaint Investigations conducted: fourteen (14) consumer complaints (product defects or illness that involved milk, milk products, pet food or livestock feeds); twenty (20) complaints of poultry or livestock neglect; twenty (21) complaints of quality of life nuisances caused by agricultural operations.
- Orders/Warnings issued: four (4) quarantine orders due to the detection of parvovirus in dogs in municipal pounds and pet shops; three (3) quarantine order due to illegal importation of livestock and 2 subsequent animal disease outbreak investigations; seventeen (17) stop sale (milk products) due to product quality violations; eighteen (18) milk quality violation warnings
- The Bureau of Regulation and Inspection's State Animal Control Division inspected 87 dog pounds, 102 pet shops, 353 pet grooming facilities, 192 commercial kennels, 79 dog training facilities, and processed 138 rabies cases where humans or domestic animals were exposed to a rabid animal. The Division investigated 1216 complaints, issued 65 written

warnings, 14 infractions, 7 misdemeanor summons and 51 arrests.

- The Licensing Unit processed applications and issued licenses and registrations during FY 2014 as follows: 121 Animal Importers, 263 Commercial Kennels, 128 Dog Training Facilities, 383 Grooming Facilities, 100 Pet Shops, 205 Animal Control Officers, 3 Egg Processing Plants, 1 Fur Breeder, 1 Commission Sales Stable, 1 Equine Auction, 90 Poultry Dealers, 35 Livestock Dealers/Brokers, 3 Swine Garbage Feeders, 114 Milk Dealers, 110 Milk Sub dealers, 2 Poultry Slaughter Facilities, 3124 Retail Dairy Stores, 130 Milk Producers, 19 Retail Raw Milk Producers, 6 Raw Milk/Cheese Manufacturers, 140 Milk Examiners (lab techs and bulk haulers), 10 Milk Laboratories, 61 Bulk Milk Pickup Tankers, 25 Cheese Manufacturers, 10 Cervidae Herds, 83 Seed labelers, 559 Feed companies (11989 registered products), 305 Fertilizer companies (3837 registered products), 14 Liming Material companies and 114 Soil Amendment Companies (403 registered products).

Licensing revenues totaled \$1,940,619.49

- Samples collected and submitted to UConn's CVMDL for livestock and poultry disease surveillance testing included: 2,646 milk samples for mastitis testing; 458 samples for swine brucellosis and pseudorabies testing; conducted T.B. (tuberculosis) surveillance testing on 6,103 dairy cows as required by the Milk Safety Program.
- Agricultural Commodities unit conducted fourteen (14) inspections of 4 registered Shell Egg graders, conducted four (4) Poultry Processor (slaughter) inspections of 2 registered poultry slaughter facilities, conducted sixty-four (64) inspections and eight (8) certifications of five (5) registered Controlled Atmosphere apple storage facilities. Collected 325 samples of seed, 140 samples of livestock feed and 86 samples of fertilizer for laboratory analysis conducted by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station.
- Collected and analyzed 1,087 samples of processed/manufactured milk, milk products and cheese, 62 samples of raw milk for pasteurization and 288 samples of retail raw milk for compliance with milk safety regulations including the presence of pathogens and animal drug residues.
- Through funding from a Federal-State agreement with the USDA-Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) Specialty Crops Inspection Division, a Bureau staff member, licensed as a USDA auditor and under the direction of the Bureau, provides USDA food safety audits that include Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)/Good Handling Practices (GHP) Audits, Produce GAP Harmonized Audits, and commodity specific audits. These are voluntary food safety audits that verify adherence to the recommendations made in the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. Requesting farms/businesses that meet the minimum requirements receive a certificate from the USDA and are listed on the USDA-AMS website. In 2013, 7 Connecticut farms/businesses were audited and met the minimum audit requirements outlined by USDA-AMS. This program will continue to assist Connecticut farmers, repackers, and wholesalers in remaining competitive nationwide and worldwide as the

demand for food safety programs continues to grow.

- Pursuant to the provisions of C.G.S. §22-126a, *Testing of Animals in Drawing Contests*, obtained samples from 12 animals entered in draft pulling contests held at Connecticut fairs that were submitted to the University of Florida Racing Laboratory for analysis for the presence of drugs. One animal, a pulling pony, sampled during the 2013 fair season tested positive for the presence of the drug Caffeine. As a result, enforcement action was taken by prohibiting both the animal that tested positive for the presence of a drug and the owner from entering pulling contests in the state for a period of one year.
- In cooperation with the Department of Correction, the Bureau continued to operate a large animal rescue/rehabilitation facility at the York Correctional Center in Niantic. This past fiscal year the State Animal Control Division seized 8 horses, 1 mule, 2 donkeys, 2 sheep, 2 goats and 1 chicken from abusive situations and the animals were added to the animal population at the facility. The Bureau also continues to work with the farm programs at the Corrigan – Radgowski and Northern Correctional Centers housing various livestock at these facilities.
- With USDA cooperative agreement funding support, the Bureau continued animal disease surveillance and outreach activities for Avian Influenza, Scrapie and other reportable animal diseases; continued implementation of the National Animal Disease Traceability Program; and partially funded two positions associated with the cooperative agreement programs. The Bureau provided funding to the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (CVMDL) at the University of Connecticut to conduct the essential diagnostic services and to support personnel needed to accomplish surveillance goals and to assist in animal disease investigations and disease-free status certifications i.e. National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP). State animal health surveillance information is coordinated by the State Veterinarian and shared with USDA through quarterly accomplishment reports and participation in the National Animal Health Reporting System (NAHRS) and the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN).
- Avian Influenza Surveillance Activities – 6,142 birds were tested from 82 commercial flocks (1,779 out of 5,254,731 birds) and 272 backyard poultry flocks (4,363 out of 10,428 birds); 138 avian necropsy cases were examined for AI and financially supported by the 2013 Notifiable Avian Influenza cooperative agreement; and over 73 poultry outreach visits occurred, distributing over 500 pieces of USDA AI and *Biosecurity for Birds* literature and calendars.
- Scrapie Surveillance Activities - 25 sheep and 24 goats, were necropsied at the CVMDL and tested negative for Scrapie. The 2013 Scrapie Surveillance portion of the cooperative agreement partially subsidized the necropsy evaluation for owners to encourage laboratory submissions and to meet surveillance goals set by USDA.

- The Bureau continues to maintain the current Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) infrastructure and expand its ADT program through continued funding support through a USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services cooperative agreement. The USDA ADT Final Rule requires states to meet USDA performance standards for official animal identification and for monitoring and reporting interstate animal movement activities based on data generated from Interstate Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (ICVI), Exhibition and Import Permits as well as investigations of illegal importation of targeted species and timed test trace-backs.
- Official animal identification and animal interstate movement information is entered into a number of electronic data bases that include: the Standardized Premise Registration System (SPRS); Trace First's Core One application (formerly the Animal Health and Surveillance Management (AHSM) database); the Animal Identification Numbering Management System (AINMS); and the Veterinary Services Process Streamlining System (VSPPS). Required USDA e-Authentication Level 2 access authorization and USDA Information Security Awareness Training is renewed annually by the Bureau Director, the State Veterinarian and the Traceability Program Coordinator.

The Bureau continues to optimize the acquisition and search ability of existing and future animal disease traceability data by increasing our electronic capture capabilities from animal movement documentation, from routine disease surveillance testing and from disease eradication programs. These activities further enhance the capability to conduct a rapid response to a zoonotic or foreign animal disease event or natural disaster event by increasing the levels of official animal identification through a unique location identifier process.

During the past year, the Bureau has experienced an increase in participation of producers in many of Connecticut's animal traceability initiatives. There were 54 requests from producers for Premise Identification Numbers, up from 8 the previous year. The Bureau distributed 14,799 NUES metal ear tags and 3,391 "840" RFID ear tags to cattle producers. The increases can be attributed to outreach efforts that included personal contacts; an informational news release in the Department's Weekly Agricultural Report distributed to 5,000 email and 350 print subscribers; to accredited veterinarians; direct mailings to cattle producers (748) and small ruminant producers (300). Mailing lists were created throughout the past year based on information from Connecticut-origin and out-of-state ICVI's including ones not in compliance with Official Identification standards; producer lists provided by the UConn Cooperative Extension System; and the UConn annual beef sale consignee list (#398).

Improvements have been made in standard operating procedures that have resulted in a more efficient, streamlined process for organizing and recording data in searchable formats.

BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCE PRESERVATION

- Continued to work on cooperative joint municipal farmland preservation projects with 15 towns including Bethany, Brooklyn, Coventry, Columbia, Cromwell, Ellington, Hampton, Lebanon, Mansfield, New Hartford, New Milford, Somers, Southbury, Suffield, Woodstock, as well as on joint acquisition projects with the Connecticut Farmland Trust.
- \$10 million in bond funds were authorized by the legislature and allocated in lump sum funding by the State Bond Commission for the Farmland Preservation Program to fund the purchase development rights.
- Development rights were acquired on seven farms totaling 696 acres at a total cost of \$3,721,986, bringing the total number of farms protected to 303 farms and 41,256 acres. Six of the farms included municipal partnerships contributing \$594,880.
- 34 additional farm development rights projects are pending, totaling 3,400 acres for \$20,119,585.
- 27 farms have development rights contract offers extended on 2,753 acres for \$14,908,000, which includes the involvement of 14 municipal and land trust partnerships.
- Continued cooperative farmland protection efforts with established municipal programs including the permanent protection of farms located in at least 15 municipalities.
- Bureau continued to assist other agencies, such as the Department of Corrections, with the administration of leasing State-owned farmlands.
- Legislation passed transferring custody and control of approximately 922 acres of farmland at the Southbury Training School Farm in Southbury and Roxbury to the Department with an agricultural conservation easement to be conveyed to a 3rd party, the Southbury Land Trust.
- Seven (7) farms in six counties are active in the pilot of the Community Farms Preservation Program (CFPP). Of these, four (4) farms are under contract and approved by the State Properties Review Board (except one which is pending approval), one (1) joint state-town offer is pending, one (1) two-town joint state-town proposal is being negotiated, and one (1) farm configuration is confirmed and appraisal put out to bid. Twenty-five municipalities have entered into cooperative agreements, a figure that has more than doubled since the announcement of the CFPP in 2011. To date, the

Department received over 20 applications to CFPP. The Department published at least three articles with information on CFPP, presented at town and statewide workshops for agricultural stakeholders, and fielded numerous calls for information and technical assistance from farmers and local officials seeking eligibility for CFPP. The purpose of the Community Farms Program is to encourage locally supported farmland preservation on smaller farms that have excellent agricultural soils and contribute to local economic activity, but which may not be eligible for other protection programs.

- Submission of an application for the federal fiscal year 2014 USDA Agricultural Lands Easement program resulted in a \$2,699,400 award of obligated funds for seven farms.
- The Farmland Restoration Program (FLRP) was created in 2011 (see P.A. 11-1). This voluntary program provides matching grants of up to \$20,000 for restoration activities that increase the state's farmland resource base for production agriculture, with an emphasis on prime and statewide important farmland soil, and human and livestock food production. A conservation plan, or farmland restoration plan, is required for participation. One hundred fifteen applications on farms situated in municipalities across the state have been received to date. The proposals seek to restore an average of 11.9 acres per farm or over 1100 total acres, with an average grant cost of \$2,530 per acre and an average projected grant of \$15,311 per project.
- Printed six agricultural brochures and updated all online listings promoting Connecticut agricultural producers and Connecticut Grown farm products from across the state. The agency continues to distribute Connecticut Farm Maps. Printed brochures are distributed to five Connecticut tourism welcome centers, U.S. Department of Agriculture regional centers, and UConn Cooperative Extension offices. They are also available at department displays, trade shows and presentations.
- Continued to produce and distribute the Connecticut Weekly Agricultural Report. The report contains informational articles; price reports for fruits, vegetables, eggs, livestock, and hay; and classified advertising. In FY 2013-14, the report's e-mail and print subscriber list grew to almost 2,000. The report is also posted on the agency's website.
- Continued a positive working relationship with the Department of Economic and Community Development and its Office of Tourism through Connecticut Open House Day, the Agri-tourism Brochure Distribution Program, and involvement running three agricultural related booths in the Connecticut Building during the 2014 Big E.
- Updated and developed new pages for the agency website which enables website visitors easier access to farmers, pertinent regulations and statutes, license and permit applications, information on farmland preservation, the Hartford Regional Farmers' Market, the Hartford Regional Wholesale Market, and grant applications. The website also allows the public easier access to farm, farmers' markets, public health, animal control, pet health and aquaculture-related information.

- Continued support of the Connecticut wine industry through the Connecticut Farm Wine Development Council. Promotion of the industry took place at the state tourism conference in May 2014; the right to sell Connecticut wine by the bottle in the Connecticut Building was successfully obtained for the 2014 Big E.
- Received \$428,912 from the United States Department of Agriculture's, Agricultural Marketing Service, and Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. These funds will be used for eight projects: six by state producer associations, one in cooperation with the Department of Consumer Protection, and one conducted by the agency to solely enhance the competitiveness of Connecticut specialty crops.
- Received \$400,000 from the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service, Specialty Crop Block Grant Program to fund nine projects.
- Awarded \$373,391.79 to seven sub-grantees through the United State Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service's Specialty Crop Block Grant-Farm Bill Program to solely enhance the competitiveness of Connecticut specialty crops through September 2016.
- Awarded \$395,398 to seven projects through the United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service specialty Crop Block Grant Program to solely enhance the competitiveness of Connecticut specialty crops through September 2016.
- Awarded \$25,000 to 15 sub-grantees through the agency's Connecticut Grown Joint Venture Grant program to increase the visibility of the Connecticut Grown logo and promote Connecticut agricultural products through a 50/50 cost-share grant program.
- Continued partnering with Food Export Northeast to increase Connecticut exports to international markets.
- Provided over 100 Certificates of Free Sale to eligible food companies wishing to export products in need of required documentation in order to expedite the shipments.
- Continued to promote farmers' markets throughout the state. The state is home to 125 certified farmers' markets, with over 600 farmers and vendors selling local products and contributing to the local economy. The Department also administers the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). This supplemental food program provides Connecticut Grown fruits and vegetables to WIC clients (women, infant, and children enrolled in DPH's State WIC Program), low income seniors and families with children between the ages of 5 and 18 living in Connecticut Housing and Finance Authority Housing (CHFA) sites. The FMNP serves over 50,000 WIC clients, over 32,000 low income seniors and over 1,806 CHFA families. Clients receive their benefits from the local agencies that include: local WIC offices, seniors/social services offices and CHFA housing

administrators. Eligible FMNP clients purchased Connecticut Grown fruits and vegetables valued at over \$783,000 at authorized farmers' markets throughout Connecticut in 2013.

- In conjunction with the Connecticut Agricultural Information Council hosted Ag Day at the Capitol, an event held annually. Over fifty agricultural organizations assemble in the North Lobby and Hall of Flags in the State Capitol Building to showcase Connecticut agricultural offerings and highlight the importance of agriculture in Connecticut.
- There are fifty-one farmers and 11 wholesalers in the program. Wholesalers report working with over 100 more farmers in the state to distribute locally grown food to schools. The Department serves as the lead on two regional groups for the state.
- Continued to add listings on the Farm Link website, with 256 farm seekers and 111 farm owners who are presently or have been listed with the program. There are over 3,174 acres presently listed on the site. The Department coordinates and participates with other programs in the region in this work.
- The Farm-to-Chef Program continued in FY 2013-14 to connect Connecticut Grown producers with commercial foodservice professionals. Since the program's inception in October 2006, it has scheduled tours/workshops to educate chefs, annual meetings of members, and an annual Farm-to-Chef Week each September to raise public awareness of Connecticut Grown ingredients and agriculture. The program has aligned itself closely with the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development to complement the council's work.
- During the reporting period no Farm Reinvestment Grants were awarded to farmers due to non-allocation of funding.
- Since 2005 Agriculture Viability Grants and Farm Transition Grants have been awarded to 134 producers, 2 agricultural Cooperatives, 77 municipalities and 37 Agricultural non-profits totaling over \$7,741,845 with total project values over \$20,016,527.
- Using Community Investment Account funds, Farm Transition Grants were awarded to 22 producers totaling \$508,407 with total project values of \$1,479,899; and to 12 non-profits and 10 municipalities totaling \$421,839 with total project values of \$983,889.
- Constructed in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the 32-acre state-owned Hartford Regional Market is the largest perishable food distribution hub between Boston and New York. Its original warehouse buildings, now in poor physical condition, continue to serve wholesalers and food processors of various sizes, while a shed structure and parking area provide 144 stalls for farmers to sell directly to consumers and wholesale buyers. In FY 2013-14 the Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Division of Construction Services and a national consultant team hired through a competitive bid

process, undertook and completed a master plan for the facility that will revolutionize the way it serves the farm and food system communities.