



Agriculture



With over 59,000 dairy cows in Fond du Lac county, ensuring high-quality forage production is critical to sustaining milk production and farm profitability. Helping growers meet forage quality goals for their farm means lower outside feed costs, healthier cows and improved sustainability of that farm. Furthermore, given the key role Spanish-speaking workers play, providing bilingual information is essential. Through training, newsletters, webinars, workshops, and other resources, Extension's Agriculture team ensures that feasible, science-based practices are accessible to farmers, managers and workers. This approach helps improve communication, increase efficiency, and enhance the overall performance of local dairy operations.

(Manuel Pena Pena, Liz Gartman)

An article for farmers and farm workers, where we explained the different types of fiber in a dairy diet and how they affect milk production, to help them better understand fiber as a key nutrient, interpret lab reports, and identify nutrition-related issues at the feed bunk, leading to improved overall farm performance.

- We created this bilingual article in response to a common knowledge gap observed on dairy farms regarding the nutrients in cow diets and their impact on milk production. Many farmers and workers lacked access to clear, practical information on how to interpret fiber values from lab reports and apply that knowledge on the farm. This effort aimed to improve understanding of fiber as a key nutrient, helping farm teams make more informed decisions to support cow health and feed efficiency. We developed a bilingual educational article tailored to both farmers and farm workers, focusing on the role of fiber in dairy cow diets. We ensure technical accuracy and present the information in an accessible format for a wide range of readers. The article explains types of fiber, their impact on milk production, how to read fiber values in lab reports, and simple ways to assess fiber on-farm. Since it is an article its outcome cannot be determined yet but our goal was to bridge the communication gap and provide practical tools that could be immediately applied in daily feeding management.

Crops | *Liz Gartman, Regional Crops Educator*

An informational article for forage growers, dairy producers and agriculture consultants where guidance surrounding optimum corn silage management practices were shared along with an update on the new corn silage data visualization tool. Through this article, stakeholders can learn more about optimum corn silage management and how this new Extension tool can help create a harvest plan to maximize corn silage forage quality. (Liz Gartman)

- The University of Wisconsin Madison Division of Extension has a long history of partnering with cooperatives, feed dealers, growers, forage councils and consultants to offer a network of silage dry down events across the state to help growers monitor whole plant moisture.
- Efforts were made during the 2024 growing season to find a way to allow growers to use the data in real time, resulting in the Corn Silage Harvest Management Tool. Creation of the tool was one step in the data visualization process.
- The next step was to make growers and consultants more aware of the tool and how it can fit into their corn silage harvest plan. This article shared some of the key management steps when harvesting corn silage and outlined how growers can use the tool to dig into the data from their region of the state. The Wisconsin State Farmer has a broad reach across Wisconsin in print as well as online.

A presentation during the scheduled Badger Crop Connect series where I provided basic corn silage management recommendations from our UW Madison specialists and shared our new Corn Silage Harvest Management Tool. Through



this presentation, I demonstrated how stakeholders can effectively use the tool to help plan their individual corn silage harvest to ensure appropriate whole plant moisture to meet forage quality goals. (Liz Gartman)

- Our Extension research and data collection efforts are a key part of our job, but just as important is the outreach to share how stakeholders can use this work on their farms everyday.
- As part of the Badger Crop Connect Corn Silage episode, there was room to share the work we have done on the new Corn Silage Harvest management tool.
- As a response to the opportunity to share, I created a presentation that outlined important corn silage harvest metrics that growers should employ to ensure harvest timing that allows for proper forage fermentation, along with the methods used to develop our Corn Silage Harvest Management tool, and how to use the tool to plan their harvest.

Dairy | *Manuel Peña, Regional Dairy Educator*

A radio interview for a Fond du Lac local radio station, for farmers and agricultural industry persons, where I took advantage to talk about the ongoing needs assessment and promote the Bilingual Calving Management Practices Workshop which will happen on the 28 and 29 of August.

- Dairy Farmers use a variety of sources to get information, including radio. This conversation focused on the upcoming Bilingual Calving Management Practices Workshop. Providing this information in a public media metric allows people who may be underserved or unaware of Extension agriculture programs to learn more about the types of programs offered and allows them to engage in the programs that meet their needs. This improved outreach allows Extension to serve clients that are outside of our normal means of contact



Community Development



UW Extension Fond du Lac County Community Development provides educational programming through capacity-building workshops such as Fund Development and Fundraising, facilitates community conversations that spark collaboration and action on emerging needs, and supports organizational leaders with 1:1 coaching, professional development, and connections to resources.

Noah Reif, Community Development Educator

A facilitated board retreat for the Fond du Lac United Way to prepare board members, staff, and volunteers to meet upcoming financial goals through facilitated engagement, education and action planning.

The United Way executive director and chair of the campaign committee approached the educator and asked for facilitation support at their August retreat. The identified objectives included facilitating a space for the Board and Staff to connect authentically, clarifying the purposes of a Nonprofit Board and Nonprofit Staff with an emphasis on fiduciary responsibility to the organization, and identifying meaningful ways for all board members, staff, and volunteers to build a culture of philanthropy. The educator facilitated the Fond du lac United Way board retreat on August 12, 2025. Participants learned about fundraising strategies, opportunities to diversify organizational funding, and clarified 2025 campaign goals. The retreat was attended by 13 participants, 9 board members and 4 staff, from the Fond du Lac United Way. Participants rated the retreat highly (4 out of 5) on new knowledge gained and highly (4.2 out of 5) on usefulness. The educator's facilitation and quality of presentation was evaluated as a 4.5 out of 5. The educator will continue to work with the organization in designing, implementing, and evaluating the fundraising plan developed in collaboration with the United Way board and staff.

"Noah taught us about the best practices in fundraising models. She helped us to challenge our thinking about future fundraising efforts. Noah was an excellent facilitator. She made the ideas tangible goals and helped frame out a real action plan." - Board Retreat Participant

Human Development and Relationships



UW Extension Fond du Lac County Extension Human Development & Relationships provides programs that promote housing stability, support youth, and strengthen families. The Rent Smart program helps families gain the knowledge and skills needed to secure and maintain housing, while Adulting 101: Keys to Independence prepares older youth aging out of foster care with life skills in finance, careers, and communication. The program also offers Co-Parenting Education to improve communication between co-parents, address the impact of divorce on children, and build strategies for resilience. In addition, Extension supports helping professionals by providing financial education, professional development, and connections to financial resources.

Carol Bralich, Human Development and Relationships Educator

All families experience transitions in life, and many will experience divorce, separation, or changes in the custody of their children. In the United States nearly half of all marriages will end in divorce and divorced parenthood is common. Divorce and separation can have profound consequences for children, parents, and families, although adequate support can mitigate negative outcomes in childhood and adolescence. The quality of parenting and the presence of parental conflict are key drivers of children's well-being and are often the focus of court-mandated parent education during this time.

Extension's Family Engagement and Relationship program in Fond du Lac County partners with the family court to provide parent education for parents and caregivers experiencing divorce, separation, or changes in the custody of their children. *Living Apart and Parenting Together* is a three-hour program in Fond du Lac County that provides parents and caregivers with valuable skills for reducing parental conflict, improving communication with co-parents, supporting children during periods of uncertainty and understanding the legal custody and placement process. The program is offered in-person co-facilitated with a family court social worker.

As a result of the co-parenting program, parents improve their understanding of parental well-being, co-parenting relationships, and parent-child relationships. Most parents who respond to the post-program survey feel more prepared to coach their child through difficulties related to divorce or separation and are more confident they can keep their child out the middle of parenting issues. Most parents also report learning new strategies to communicate effectively with their co-parent. The impact of this co-parenting program is important because changes in family structure can have profound impacts on child and parent well-being, findings well documented by research. Parents who receive and engage with parenting classes during family structure changes can learn valuable and effective communication and parenting skills that act as major buffers from the deleterious effects of instability. One participant stated, "It is about the kids, not me or my co-parent." Another participant stated, "I statement use helps focus on the solution in a respectful way."

Positive Youth Development



UW Extension Fond du Lac County youth grow into engaged, empathetic leaders through hands-on learning and meaningful service. Our 4-H program offers enriching experiences—from STEM challenges and animal science to creative arts—that spark curiosity and build confidence. Signature events like *Family Learning Day* and *Summer Day Camps* provide opportunities for exploration and skill-building, while service projects such as food drives and care kit assembly foster civic responsibility and community connection. In partnership with local schools and the Boys & Girls Club, we also offer after-school clubs that create inclusive spaces for growth and belonging.

Tracy Keifenheim, 4-H Program Educator

In response to youth interest in experiential learning, Fond du Lac County 4-H hosted a three-day Art Day Camp in August 2025, designed to help participants explore their Sparks—areas of personal interest—through hands-on engagement with visual arts. The camp addressed a community need for interactive summer programming that builds confidence, supports healthy habits, and fosters practical life skills in a safe and inclusive environment. Youth expressed a desire to improve their artistic and culinary abilities, prompting the creation of a program that emphasized creativity, skill-building, and reflection.

Led by a collaborative team of staff and volunteers, the camp offered diverse activities including oil pastel drawing, printmaking, painting, hand-built clay pottery, soap carving, and cultural crafts such as origami and piñata making. Each day concluded with a “graffiti wall” reflection, allowing youth to share their favorite experiences and key takeaways through writing and drawing. Popular activities included Perler bead designs, clay sculpting, suncatcher painting, dream catcher construction, and pipe cleaner flower crafting.

Evaluation data revealed strong engagement and meaningful learning outcomes. Participants developed new artistic techniques, explored varied media, and gained confidence in their creative expression. The camp’s intentional structure, emphasis on daily reflection, and inclusive approach exemplified the transformative potential of youth development programming. With 12 youth participants, 2 youth volunteers, and 3 staff involved, this initiative reflects the Wisconsin Idea’s commitment to extending educational opportunities beyond the classroom and into the heart of community life.



2025 Fond du Lac County 4-H Art Camp Participants pictured with 4-H Summer Intern and 4-H Educator after 3 days of all things Art.



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