

## February, 2013 Food For Thought

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### Ag Literature 2013

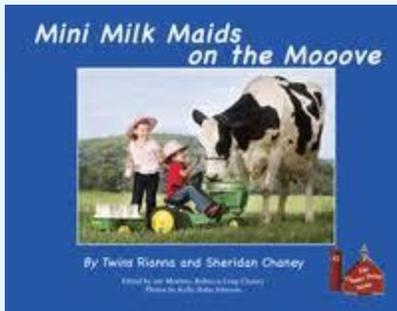
We have already scheduled many volunteers to read and present at schools for our Agriculture Literature Program. However, it's not too late to get involved. If you would like to participate as a reader or have a program come to your school please contact us.

### Greetings,

A cold winter day hardly seems like the best time to be thinking about an outdoor field day at school, but it is the time when some of us are planning and hoping for spring warmth and sun for an Agriculture Awareness Day. What is an Ag Awareness Day and why would a school want to hold one? There are many ways to answer that question and some experts will share their thoughts elsewhere in this newsletter. In general, such an event is an opportunity to help students (and teachers) realize that agriculture is all around us in New Hampshire. Farmers and other agriculture or natural resource professionals take time to share what they do and why it is important to our daily lives.

Holding an Ag Awareness Day at a school has many benefits. Farmers and presenters come to the school so there are no busing schedules or expenses to deal with. Students are used to the setting and the "home rules" but bringing guests to their school gives a sense of specialness to the day. Most of all, the opportunity to meet many different farmers all in one place provides a look at the diversity that abounds in our agricultural sector.

The educational benefits are too numerous to name here but will be explored in other sections.. I have



This year's theme is dairy. The book is Mini Milk Maids on the Mooove. We have books and teacher packets available. Partial funding for these materials has been made possible by generous donations from the Granite State Dairy Promotion [www.nhdairypromo.org](http://www.nhdairypromo.org) and Cabot Creamery. [www.cabotcheese.coop](http://www.cabotcheese.coop) We really appreciate their support. You can appreciate them too by purchasing products from local dairy farmers and/or made by Cabot.

## Ag Awareness Resources

The meat of any Ag Awareness Day is of course the presenters and what they bring to the event. With over 4100 farms in New Hampshire, it shouldn't be hard to find some farmers in your area who would be willing to come and share their knowledge with students. But how do you find them? Below is a partial list of places to turn. If you try some of these sources and are still having trouble, contact us.

**Farmers' Markets** - There are about 90 different markets across the state! Each has a coordinator or committee that organizes them. Contact the market(s) nearest you to get a list of their vendors.

- NH Department of Agriculture Markets and Food:
- [www.agriculture.nh.gov/publications](http://www.agriculture.nh.gov/publications)
- NH Farmers Market Association: [www.nhfma.org](http://www.nhfma.org)

asked two Ag Awareness Day coordinators to share from their experiences so that other educators can learn what is involved. It may seem like a lot of work, and the first time it is. But perhaps with a few tips, resources and inspirational stories some of you will think about giving this a try. As always, we're here to help.

If hosting an Ag Awareness Day at your school presents too many challenges, consider attending a School to Farm Day. We coordinate several of these for 4th grade students around the state including ones at Brookdale Farm in Hollis on April 16, Carter Hill Orchard in Concord on May 16-17, UNH on June 4-6 and at Ramblin' Vewe Farm in Gilford in the fall. If you would like to bring your students to one of these events, please contact us. There's always the option to plan your own field trip to a local farm as well. See the resource list for ways to find farms near you.

Whatever approach you choose, it's easy for students to meet farmers, pet animals, and taste local food as part of their curriculum. That's a lesson they will eat up for sure!

*Ruth*

Ruth Smith, Statewide Coordinator  
NH Agriculture in the Classroom

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## Agriculture and Environment Day in Candia

Nancy Maloney has retired from her job as a health educator at the Henry W. Moore School in Candia, but she hasn't retired from her role as coordinator of their Agriculture and Environment Day. Her

- NH Farms: [www.nhfarms.com](http://www.nhfarms.com)

**Farm Organizations** - These are membership organizations. You may be able to get some contacts from them

- NH Farm Bureau: [www.nhfarmbureau.org](http://www.nhfarmbureau.org)
- NOFA-NH: [www.nofanh.org](http://www.nofanh.org)
- Small and Beginner Farmers of NH: [www.beginnerfarmers.org](http://www.beginnerfarmers.org)

**Consumer Groups** - These groups help connect farmers and consumers.

- NH Eat Local: [www.nheatlocal.org](http://www.nheatlocal.org)
- NH Farm to Restaurant Connection: [www.nhfarmtorestaurant.com](http://www.nhfarmtorestaurant.com)
- NH Farm to School: [www.nhfarmtoschool.org](http://www.nhfarmtoschool.org)
- Seacoast Eat Local: [www.seacoateatlocal.org](http://www.seacoateatlocal.org)

Several local food groups are sponsored by County Conservation Districts, see Government Agencies below



**Commodity and Interest Groups** - These are specific to a particular product, animal or topic, this is a partial list.

- Eastern Draft Horse Association: [www.easterndrafthorse.com](http://www.easterndrafthorse.com)
- Granite State Dairy Promotion [www.nhdairypromo.com](http://www.nhdairypromo.com)
- New England Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association: [www.neaoba.org](http://www.neaoba.org)
- NH Beekeepers Association: [www.nhbeekeepers.org](http://www.nhbeekeepers.org)
- NH Fruit Growers Association:

colleagues made sure of that. The event has become so popular since its inception in 2008 that everyone involved including teachers, students and presenters look forward to it each spring.

A few years ago, Nancy and a co-worker visited the NH Farm and Forest Expo (see the calendar listing for this year's information) and were so impressed by the diversity of exhibitors illustrating the vibrancy of agriculture and natural resources in the state that they said, "Why can't we do something like this is Candia?" So they did.

The initial goal was to raise awareness among the students that local farms exist and how important they are. It was clear that this message was needed when Nancy had a discussion with a student about sheep and wool and the student responded, "My mom buys real yarn from Wal-Mart". That was her inspiration.

The first challenge was to convince teachers in the school that this event would fit within their curriculum and be worthwhile. Armed with the state educational frameworks she provided specific examples of how visits with bee keepers, sheep farmers, foresters and more could help teach science, social studies, math and language arts. The administration was also convinced and has been supportive from the start. These are key elements to the success of a program like this.

The next step was to line up presenters. (See Resource section for how to find farmers in your area). New Hampshire farmers know that raising public awareness will ultimately lead to more educated consumers who will support local agriculture. So it

- [www.nhfruitgrowers.org](http://www.nhfruitgrowers.org)
- NH Maple Producers: [www.nhmapleproducers.com](http://www.nhmapleproducers.com)
- NH Plant Growers Association: [www.nhpga.org](http://www.nhpga.org)
- NH Pork Producers: [www.nhpork.org](http://www.nhpork.org)
- NH Sheep & Wool Grower's Association: [www.nhswga.com](http://www.nhswga.com)

**Government Agencies** - Your tax dollars at work, these are great resources.

- NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food: [www.agriculture.nh.gov](http://www.agriculture.nh.gov)
- UNH Cooperative Extension: [www.extension.unh.edu](http://www.extension.unh.edu) - visit your county page
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and County Conservation Districts: [www.nh.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nh.nrcs.usda.gov) - visit your county conservation districts



## Calendar

**February 8-9: NH Farm & Forest Expo, Manchester, NH** - Come visit our booth [www.nhfarmandforestexpo.org](http://www.nhfarmandforestexpo.org)



doesn't take much convincing to get farmers to commit to spending a few hours with children. The hardest part is finding the time. It helps to know something about the seasonality of various products and procedures. For instance, don't try to get a maple producer to leave his sugar house in March or get an apple grower to volunteer her time in September. But if you are respectful of their unique ebbs and flows and pressures, they are usually happy to work with you. Nancy found many willing volunteers.

The Moore School now has over 30 presenters that attend their annual event. Most are from the local area, but a few travel quite a distance to be there. The entire student body of over 400, from kindergarten to eighth grade, is involved. Each class visits 5 stations for about 30 minutes. Presentations are designated for specific grades so that the presenters can plan age appropriate programs and the students can learn about different topics each year. Nancy provided speakers with clear expectations and suggestions of ways that their areas of focus could tie in with school lessons.

The event now covers more than agriculture. There is an environmental component as well. In addition to sheep shearing, horseshoeing, beekeeping, alpaca petting, beef and venison farmers, poultry, pigs and Master Gardeners, there are programs on animal rehabilitation, recycling, timber framing and forestry.

Support from the community has helped too. The local Agway donates fencing for the day. The eighth grade classes help set that up in advance. The PTO provides

**March 10-11: NH Science Teachers Conference - Keene, NH** Join us for a workshop on school gardens.  
[www.nhsta.net](http://www.nhsta.net)

**March 19: National Ag Day**  
Contact us to participate in the Ag Literacy Program

**"Cows and Communities: How the Lowly Bovine Has Nurtured NH through Four Centuries"**, by Steve Taylor.

All programs start at 7:00 pm and are open to teachers, parents and community members. Admission is free.

**April 1:** Weare Town Hall

**April 3:** Prescott Farm EE Center, Laconia

**April 30:** Nottingham School

These programs are funded by the NH Humanities Council  
[www.nhhc.org](http://www.nhhc.org)



**June 25-28: National Ag in the Classroom Conference, Minneapolis, MN**

On-line registration is open:  
[www.agclassroom.org/conference2013](http://www.agclassroom.org/conference2013)

## Contacts

NH Ag in the Classroom  
Ruth Smith, Statewide Coordinator  
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295 Sheep Davis Road  
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Deb Robie, Grafton County Coordinator  
[wehunt4@paigecos.com](mailto:wehunt4@paigecos.com)

lunch for the speakers.

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and inspires Nancy to keep doing this in her "retirement". Teachers love it because the kids love it. The kids are excited by the live animals, but also by learning new things and connecting with local experts. Some got so excited that they wanted to come back as presenters the following year. A couple of 8th graders set up a booth on their outdoor interests and though they have moved on to high school, continue to come back as part of a community service project.

Nancy says that the biggest challenge is the weather. Even with some of the presentations in classrooms severe weather can be a problem for the outside portion. As with any event, a back up plan is important.

The first year was the hardest, says Nancy. Now things really fall into place because everyone knows what to expect. Perhaps that is a bit of an exaggeration, but it is clear that this event is worth all the efforts large and small to raise awareness and appreciation of agriculture. Hats off to Nancy Maloney and her colleagues and here's to many more successful Agriculture and Environment Days at the Moore School . . . and elsewhere!

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## Agriculture Awareness Days - A Northern Perspective

by Deb Robie



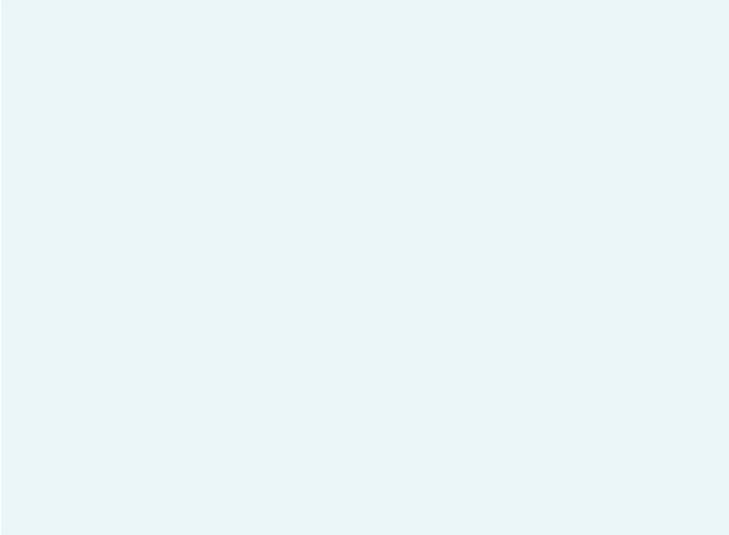
When was the last time one of your students from several years ago stopped you in a local store and remembered a lesson you taught them? How often do they say thanks for making learning fun? It happens to me all the time.

How do you think your students today would react if they had a llama come to visit them at school? What impression would a draft horse make on a preschool student? What about the lady that brings seeds to school so they can plant a flower for mom? Soft noses, cute faces, big floppy ears, big brown eyes and a few strange noises, that is what an Ag Awareness Day is all about.

Depending on your school it is probably easier to have farmers and animals come to you than you go to a farm. The diversity of plants and animals in your area might surprise you.

There are, of course, safety concerns, health and wellness issues, schedules, weather and youth in general to deal with but in the end if the students and teachers leave with a better understanding of the agriculture all around them, then it is highly worth it.

Throughout our state there are several different events that happen every year. Events in Grafton County where farmers and growers come to the schools with bunnies, horses, calves, sheep, fiber artists, llamas, working steers, pigs, Master Gardeners, elk farmers, nutrition educators and more have grown in size and scale. Just those two reach over 400 students. There are several others in the state that schools take part in and some smaller events happening during our Ag Lit



programs.

Please contact our state office at 224-1934 and speak with Ruth Smith about how to set one up at your school. There are farmers and volunteers in your area that would be happy to help set it up. If you are in Grafton County please call Deb Robie at 747-3869.

Thanks for all you do for New Hampshire's most important commodity, our children!!

NH Agriculture in the Classroom | 295 Sheep Davis Rd | Concord, New Hampshire 03301 | 603-224-1934