

Worthy State Master, Brothers, Sisters and delegates alike,

Thank you again for another year as State Agriculture Committee chair. I would like to start where I ended last year. Shortly after I reported, we heard from Shawn Jasper the State Commissioner of Agriculture. I personally have taken offense of his take on why Agriculture in NH is failing... Though I'm sure that Moneys does have some effect on the down fall of Agriculture in NH, I do not feel that it is as much of the problem that he led on that it was. I have worked with and for Farmers for decades now, it has always been a low income job, the rewards are more internal than monetary, if it is done right. Payment is paid to the soul of the person doing the job. Many of the struggles come with rewards as much as suffering. Some Farmers having to work a second job just to pay their taxes. The ones that stop farming tend to stop, not because of not becoming a millionaire, but because of the support that use to come from the towns people, the department of Agriculture, and the Extension service have started disappearing.

In the past most people in town understood how food is produced and knew that if they didn't grow it themselves someone would provide it to them for a reasonable price. If someone planted an apple grove, they would use what they needed and sell the surplus to neighbors that would preserve it or enjoy it. Now and days people can get it from a chain store and do not need to put in the work to keep their own foods. If they go to a farm, it is for entertainment over necessity, they don't see the farmer as someone that they want to work with, but someone that facilitated a fun activity for a while. Having not had to try to produce their own food, they cannot respect that the farmer had to spend hours cutting disease and despair out of their trees, or crops or livestock. They do not respect that with every failed yield the farmer had to struggle to correct a problem just to make a pretty crop for a consumer to buy. Or for every pretty one that the farmer has on the stand it might represent 5 that got damaged that the farmer may eat or compost knowing that nobody will appreciate the work it took to grow all 6 just the 1.

In the past if you had a problem, call the county Extension service agent, they would come out and help, if they were at ends they would try to have someone from the State Department of Agriculture come and find out the problem. But this year my committee had tasked me to have a program on basic animal care. I having been to programs put on by the extension service like this reached out to the UNH extension service to see who would be good and available for such a program. To hear, we are trying to hire someone that can do these programs but currently you would have to rely on Dr. Crawford or Dr. Harvey to put on such a program. Having been to programs put on by Dr. Crawford and hearing him tell me, well those mistakes were put in by one of my employees, the fact that he either did not proof the program he was putting on, or did not notice the errors in his presentation was impressive on me in not a good way. Dr. Harvey may be a great option, but I know from experience that there are some holes in his knowledge and this particular topic I understand he does have some conflicting information from what is current practice. Hopefully I will get find someone.

This past year in May Gloria Davis and Joann Brandt and I attended the NH Old House and Barn Expo held at Saint Anselm College. Being the first year that NH State Grange had held a booth we did not know what to expect. I saw many people I knew, probably more I didn't know. If we were to continue doing a booth at this event every other year, I would suggest it be membership and Grange Historian with the book of Old NH Grange Halls. Many that stopped in spoke about old Grange Halls they had been in and the history of Granges in different towns more than making history in present day Granges. Do not get me wrong if we are not attending events we might as well be considered dead, as un-spotted from the world made us an after thought in our communities.

Following Old House and Barn Expo was Farm and Forrest and Garden Expo at the Deerfield Fair Grounds. Once again we put up a booth and seemed to draw much attention. Our theme this year was NH Grange in our community. Gloria was able to get someone to build many town building out of

cardboard, paint and decorate them. We set up a small village on two tables and decorated it with NH State Items. I was happy to hear the NH Fish and Game was not aware that the NH State Salt water Game fish was the stripped bass, and the Fresh water was the brook trout until they visited the NH State Grange booth so proclaimed during the awards ceremony. Making a great plug for Grange during that event ,even though we did not win a free booth for next year. But the biggest win was meeting 4 people that seemed very interested in the Grange, one of which I understand has even gone as far as begging Rochester Grange to allow her to come and possibly join. We also had a family in New Durham that was interested in joining and I had given them information for Chichester Grange and Rochester Grange. And one that was interested in a Grange in Concord NH, to whom I gave Deb Pattens name and number to. It gives me Great hope we may start growing again. I understand that email communication now and days can be ambiguous and not as formal as past communications, but as Lois had said I wasn't sure if I was should open or respond to an email stating about I'm interested in your group, this email almost getting discarded as junk may turn out to be silver or gold for Rochester, just like their latest new member. Once again I still feel this is a worth while event for the Grange to show themselves.

I have been on occasion having emails sent out to people by the Grange vine, thank you West household. I have not heard much from people about those, but I was happy to hear that one person was very interested when I mentioned beach leaf disease, making it worth while in my book. I have also heard from people that seem to enjoy the articles I have submitted to the Granite State Granger, thank you to the Hudson for giving me the opportunity to continue writing for you all.

Earlier I had mentioned the lack of support that the New Hampshire Farmers have run into. One of many case points available that I would like to share with you this year is The Live and Let Live farm in Chichester, NH. The NH State Jr Grange did a tour a few years ago of this shelter, to everyone's enjoyment. The Live and Let live farm has been in operation since 1996, in Chichester, NH. They are a no Kill shelter and All animals surrendered to them are to be re-homed as pets not for food. Due to this they have operated under a Pet Vendors license under control of the NH Department Of Agriculture. Over the past few years they have been having problems with one of the NH Department of Agriculture inspectors. They have put as a personal beef with them, no pun intended, they requested a different inspector from Shawn Jasper hoping for a more fair and understanding person. Their request fell upon deaf ears and no relief was granted. After telling the State that they did not have room for more animals, that they State had confiscated, everything came to a head. In July of this year the State of NH pulled their Pet Vendors License and started procedures to shut down the rescue. Trying to get them to fill out a Livestock Vendors License and report all Livestock Vendors they use to put rescues into the food chain, mainly horses.

For those people that do not know USA has not had a USDA horse processing plant since 2007, so how the State thinks they are sending horses into the food chain I would love to know where that comes from. As Live and Let Live Farm does not put animals directly into the food chain they feel they do not fall under the rules of the State Livestock License, and as of August of this year a they have been able to re-open under Judge order while it works thru the NH Court System. I for one have always heard good things about the Live and Let Live Farm in Chichester and have been hearing more and more stories such as the one, I have just recited, from other farms and how the State Department of Agriculture has become under the new leadership from the Commissioner more into an anti-farming organization, over a help.

A second example not related to the event happening at the Live and Let Live farm is very visual at fairs. Once again this year the NH State Vet Dr. Crawford, had released a letter to all Fairs that it is the strong recommendation of his office that poultry not to be shown at NH fairs again because of Avian Influenza. For those that do not know Avian Influenza has been a leading cause of egg prices and poultry meat prices going up for several years now. Since 2021 at least 280 million birds have died due to avian influenza, 59 million from domestic populations via back yard birds or large factory

poultry farms. Over the since 2021 he has made this recommendation on the rouse of a public health concern. If you have not heard in March of this year 2024 Avian Influenza has jumped to Dairy cows and now has gone thru 14 States, California, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming and 300 herds. Causing the USDA to do a no transport order for Lactating dairy cows between state lines, in hopes to stop it from spreading. Even though the virus has infected a total of 20 people 11 having been infected by Dairy cattle, 1 unknown manor of infection and 8 from poultry, did the State vet recommend not having dairy cow shows at the fairs? No, instead he, under the direction of the commissioner of Agriculture, instead wrote an article in the New Hampshire Weekly Market Bulletin "New Hampshire's Agricultural news letter" asking people to contact their representatives to get the USDA to over turn their No transport order as it was causing undue harm to New Hampshire farms and Fairs. New Hampshire has had 3 Cases of infected poultry on farms since 2022, 1 in Belknap county, 1 in Merrimack County, and one in Rockingham County, Massachusetts has had 5 since 2022, Barnstable, Berkshire, Bristol, Essex, and Middlesex Counties, and Maine has had 20 cases since 2022, 7 out of 16 counties. To enter a bird into a show at the fair it must be from a tested and clean flock for both Avian Influenza and Salmonella, the bird supper attendant normally visually checks all birds before they are removed from the car to be sure there is no sign of disease. Only then can they be loaded into cages at the fair. A copy of your farm's inspection is also held in the office of the Supper attendant and is provided to the state if an inspector walks thru. To enter is bovine at the fair, if the animal is from the state the fair is in, exhibited at they are to be rabies vaccinated. The supper attendant will normally inspect the animal for external signs but that's it.

When it comes to inspection of poultry in the state of NH blood it taken from each bird by a wing puncture, a technique that is talked about a little at all Veterinary schools, but those that go into Avian Veterinary only pass over it as a very risky technique that can increase the loss of the bird due to infection and the current technique is using an oral puncture. Many Avian Vets I have spoken with were appalled that any State would be using the out dated technique. Then the Test has a 93 percent effective rating meaning for every 100 birds tested you can expect a 7 false hits. When I had 200 birds tested, three years ago, I had 2 birds that came back as positive, causing the State Vets office to give me the alternative of putting a quarantine on the farm for 2 months while they re-test every bird, or surrender my birds for necropsy done by UNH. Where they put the birds alive in a non ventilated cardboard box, and brought them to the Lab at UNH where they would euthanize and test for both Avian Influenza and Salmonella, each time the birds came back as not infected with either disease, but as I was told by the State Vets office once we get a possible positive it takes 3 Negatives to cancel out the possible positive. Some States understanding this flaw in the testing does a percentage of the flock and do an antigen test seeing if the bird's immune system reacts to the virus... This test has an 87 percent effective rating but at the same time it is done right at the farm in front of the farmer and any birds that test positive they take an oral swab to send out for testing right there and then. All parties know what their chances are and can see and feel a positive instantly. If it wasn't that the State and Federal government pays for a set amount of tests to be run for each state I doubt that the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture would do this program as much as they do.

To finish me off for chicken talk, I believe the New Hampshire Poultry Club has closed down after many of their members moved out of New Hampshire to continue breeding and showing poultry elsewhere. A MN poultry processing plant has abruptly shut down leaving many poultry farms in surrounding states to have poultry that they cannot sell as they are contracted poultry to that processing plant, with no money coming in many of these farmers are at a loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars. They are finally starting to vaccinate poultry for Avian Influenza it is a double shot second one given days after the first.

On the rest of the Agriculture front this year without a late frost we had a good peach and Apple season, Grapes also did well. With the borderline drought conditions and humidity fungus went wild and ground crops suffered. Over all it was a good crop year for New Hampshire.

At this time I am going to say Thank you to everyone that have tolerated me for another year and time will tell how many more years you will have to tolerate me. Thank you again worthy Master (president) Trisha Tyler and members of my committee sorry I couldn't do more this year.

Submitted by Norman Brandt

NH State Grange Agriculture chair.