

AG QUARTERLY

April 2024



BERKS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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WHAT WE DO

The Berks County Department of Agriculture promotes agriculture in Berks County by preserving farmland, invigorating agricultural economic development, and connecting our community to agricultural resources.

WHO WE ARE

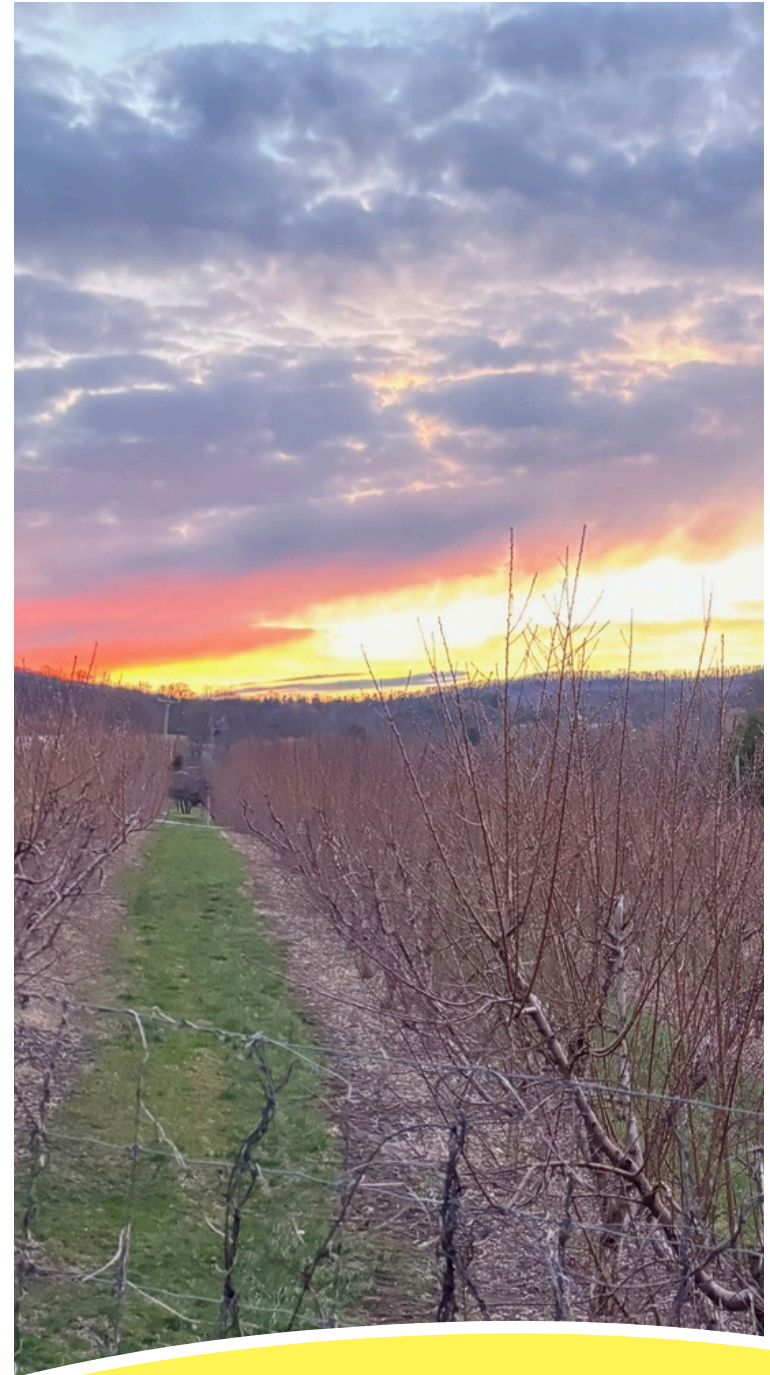
We are a department of the County of Berks, established in 2015 to serve Berks County residents. We are a team of eight staff who are dedicated to ensuring a thriving agricultural industry in Berks County.

Credits

Content and editing provided by Berks County Dept. of Agriculture staff; template design by Rick Royer, Berks County Planning.

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PRESERVATION SPOTLIGHT

Zahncroft Dairy - Sattazahn Family Settlements #57, #58, #72, & #195

- The Sattazahn Family has been farming since 1934, when father Ray, started with 24 dairy cows on 140 acres.
- Sons Robert, Clarence, and Dennis all became dairy farmers with their own operations and each chose to preserve their farms in the early years of the ACE Program.
- The home farm, Zahncroft Dairy, is currently operated by Dennis's sons, Doug and David, and their wives, who milk 270 cows and raise 225 young stock. They have made many technological advancements since the farm started and also operate a custom drone application business.



"Farming is ever-changing and evolving. It gets more complicated all the time. It requires much more business savvy and progressive thinking than it did a generation ago."

Please see our website for full articles on preserved farms.

Excerpts from "Three Brothers Become Dairy Farmers" and "Proud of the Family Heritage" By: Clyde A. B. Myers, originally published in the Reading Eagle.



AG LAND PRESERVATION STATS

3

826
Farms
Preserved

78,774
Acres
Preserved



2024 YTD:

Farms preserved: **4**
Acres preserved: **229.8**
Modification requests: **6**
Farms transferred: **12**
County invested: **\$96,863**
State invested: **\$358,928**

2024 Committed Funding:

County: **\$1,083,377.00**
State: **\$2,411,601.69**
Total: **\$3,494,978.69**

NEW 2024 Easement Purchase Cap: **\$2,800 /acre**

The purchase value of the easement is the difference between the market value and the farm value of the land. The maximum easement purchase amount, “the cap”, remains consistent with appraisal values in Berks County.

Q1 HIGHLIGHTS

National Ag Day Celebration

On March 19th, the Department celebrated National Ag Day and America250 PA Berks with a Historic Mill Lecture and Tour. Eugene Kehler gave an engaging presentation on his efforts to restore Bobb's Mill, the second oldest mill in the County. After lunch, the group toured the mill, which is located outside of Boyertown. About 50 people attended the event, which was the second in the Department's series. Last year's event focused on historic barns in the Oley Valley.





Photo Credit: Andrew Maier Elementary School

Ag Literacy Week

The Department of Ag participated in the Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture's Ag Literacy Week Program from March 11th to 15th. We read to nearly 700 students in grades K-2 from the Boyertown, Hamburg, Reading, and Schuylkill Valley school districts and talked to them about the importance of agriculture. This year's book was *Anywhere Farm* by Phyllis Root.

School Administrator Day with BCIU

The Department of Ag coordinated with BCIU to provide administrators from Berks County school districts and career & technology centers the opportunity to learn about current trends, technological advancements and career opportunities within agriculture. The participants visited Brown's Feeds and Kurtland Farms to witness the operations, and they were able to speak to industry representatives about the diverse career opportunities for students in agriculture.



Photo Credit: Berks County Intermediate Unit



OUR WORK IN NUMBERS

2023 Online Presence

Our staff's dedication to promoting agriculture via Facebook, the online Local Food Map, and the Berks Ag Event Calendar has brought exponential increases. See below for the 2023 totals for Facebook, website visits, and events posted!



2024 First quarter events



Participants in the mill
tour & superintendent day



K-2 students read to by our
staff during Ag Literacy Week

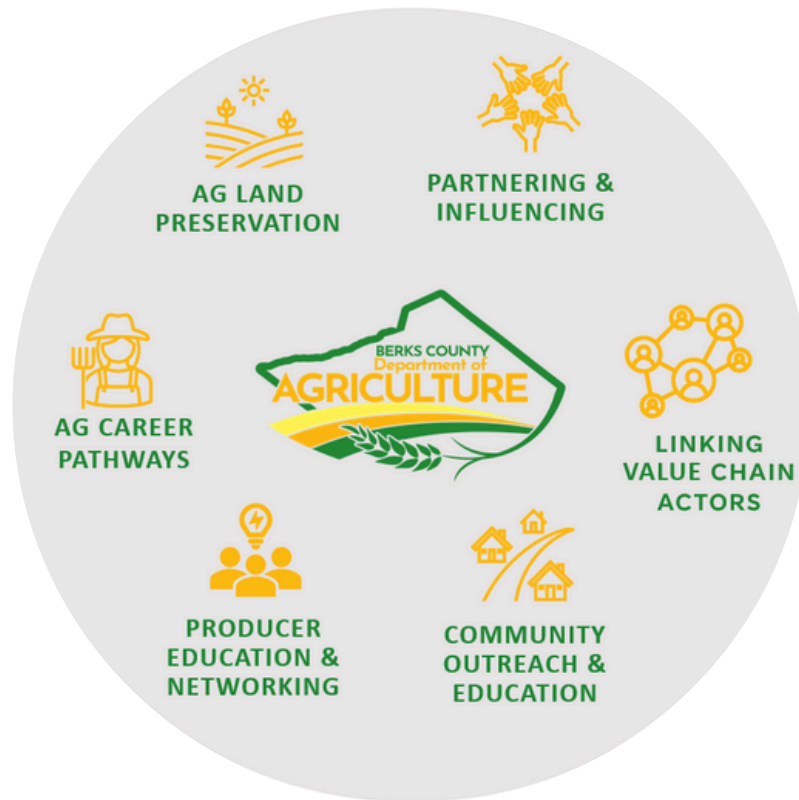


2024 OBJECTIVES

Q1 Update

Our team has started strong in 2024, making key advances on all three of our annual objectives.

Strategic Functions of the Berks County Department of Agriculture



Want to know more? Don't hesitate to reach out - we'd love to hear from you.

1. Continue strengthening the agricultural land preservation program.

- Landscape software:
 - Data verification ongoing
 - Mobile app for inspections in testing phase.
- New PA Farmland system (State-level system) utilized.

2. Refining Department of Agriculture's strategy, function, and branding.

- Berks County Ag Study: 50 individual interviews completed; focus groups scheduled; advisory committee being designed.
- Constant Contact first use for event notification.

3. Continue the Dept. of Agriculture's community outreach.

- Hosted a sold-out Historic Mill Tour & Lecture event.
- Co-organized the superintendents on the farm day with the BCIU.
- Read to 688 students during Ag Literacy Week.

UPCOMING...

You're Invited

The Berks Co. Dept. of Agriculture & IMAGINE Berks are conducting an Ag Economic Impact Study, to measure the total impact of the agricultural industry and develop a strategic action plan for the County and its partners. Please share your thoughts and ideas!

As part of the study, we are hosting three focus groups for those in the ag industry:

Tuesday, April 16: 1-3 PM

Oley Fair Center

26 Jefferson St, Oley, PA 19547

Wednesday, April 17: 9-11 AM

Bethel Twp. Municipal Bldg.

60 Klahr Rd, Bethel, PA 19507

Wednesday, April 17: 6-8 PM

Berks County Ag Center

1238 County Welfare Rd, Leesport, PA 19533

RSVPs requested at
610-378-1844 or
Deptofag@berkspa.gov

Farmers,
agribusinesses,
and other ag
professionals
welcome!

Berks County Ag Study Focus Groups | April 16-17, 2024

Audience: Farmers, agribusinesses, and other ag professionals.

Description: As part of the Berks County Ag Study, three focus groups will be held to speak with individuals who may provide insight into the Berks ag economy.

Partners: IMAGINE Berks

Gardening in Small Spaces Workshop | May 17, 2024, 5:30-7:30 pm

Audience: Residents of Reading interested in summer-long food growing.

Description: A workshop to kick off a pilot project partnering with residents of Reading to grow nutritious food utilizing the 9-bucket system.

Partners: Goggle Works, 18th Ward Improvement Association, City of Reading

Ag in the Classroom: Berks County's Food & Fiber Industry | June 11-13, 2024

Audience: Public, private, and home school teachers.

Description: A 3-day tour of the agribusiness industry of Berks County for educators in and around Berks County. See full-page description opposite.

Partners: Agribusinesses of Berks County.

Would you like to partner with us for
future events? Give us a call or email us:
610-378-1844 or DeptofAg@BerksPA.gov

**FRECON
FARMS**



June 11-13, 2024 | 8:00 am - 4:30 pm

Ag in the Classroom:

Traditions & Horizons of the Food & Fiber Industry of Berks County

Educators are invited on a 3-day tour of the agricultural industry in Berks County! Come visit and learn where your food comes from first hand! Each day we'll travel by bus to visit producers and suppliers. This year's course includes visits to Berks Packing, Tom Sturgis Pretzels, Frecon's Orchard & Market, and Twilight Acres Dairy & Creamery to name a few. We will explore the horizons of agriculture with technology, direct-to-consumer businesses, and niche agricultural products. The course also includes visits to ag education programs adaptable to students and schools like Total Experience Learning® (TExpL) at Albright College.

**Earn
26 Act 48
hours!**

Course cost: \$75 for Educators. Includes lunches & transportation.



To register, scan the QR code or go to:

<https://www.mylearningplan.com/WebReg/ActivityProfile.asp?D=13543&I=4418512>

Questions? Contact Ashley at
arice@berkspa.gov or 610-378-1844 x2548



Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Found in Cattle

Quick Facts

- On March 22, 2024, HPAI was detected in a **dairy herd** in Texas; since then cattle have tested positive for HPAI in five other states. **HPAI in cattle has *not* been detected in Pennsylvania.**
- The **source of HPAI infection in cattle is believed to be wild birds**, but potential of transmission between cattle could be possible.
- Based on current information and research, the **USDA does *not* have concerns of the safety of the commercial milk supply and is not planning a recall.**
- **Mortality in cattle due to HPAI has not been reported**, and the USDA does not anticipate the need to depopulate dairy herds due to HPAI.
- HPAI was devastating to the poultry industry in Pennsylvania in 2022, but only **two cases in non-poultry birds have been reported in PA in 2024.**

Resources & Information

- **Weekly update call for dairy industry** hosted by the Center for Dairy Excellence (see opposite page).
- **USDA updates and map of HPAI occurrences**
 - **Cattle**: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/livestock>
 - **Poultry**: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/commercial-backyard-flocks>
- **USDA FAQs sheet for HPAI in cattle**: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/hpai-dairy-faqs.pdf>

Sources:

1. <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/livestock>
2. <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/commercial-backyard-flocks>
3. <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/hpai-dairy-faqs.pdf>

**GET THE LATEST UPDATES ON:
THE RAPIDLY EVOLVING HIGHLY
PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA (HPAI)
HEALTH SITUATION AFFECTING DAIRY
CATTLE AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR FARMS**

WEEKLY

DAIRY INDUSTRY CONFERENCE CALLS

WEDNESDAYS  **1 P.M. EST**

The **Center for Dairy Excellence** is hosting weekly **Dairy Industry Conference Calls on Wednesdays at 1 p.m. EST** to provide updates on the rapidly evolving health situation with highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) affecting dairy cattle in the United States. Each week, panelists from the Department of Agriculture and other state/federal organizations will share updates on the health situation, Pennsylvania's response, and what it means for farms.

Get the details at: <https://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/about-the-center/upcoming-events/event/weekly-hpai-calls/>.

DID YOU KNOW?

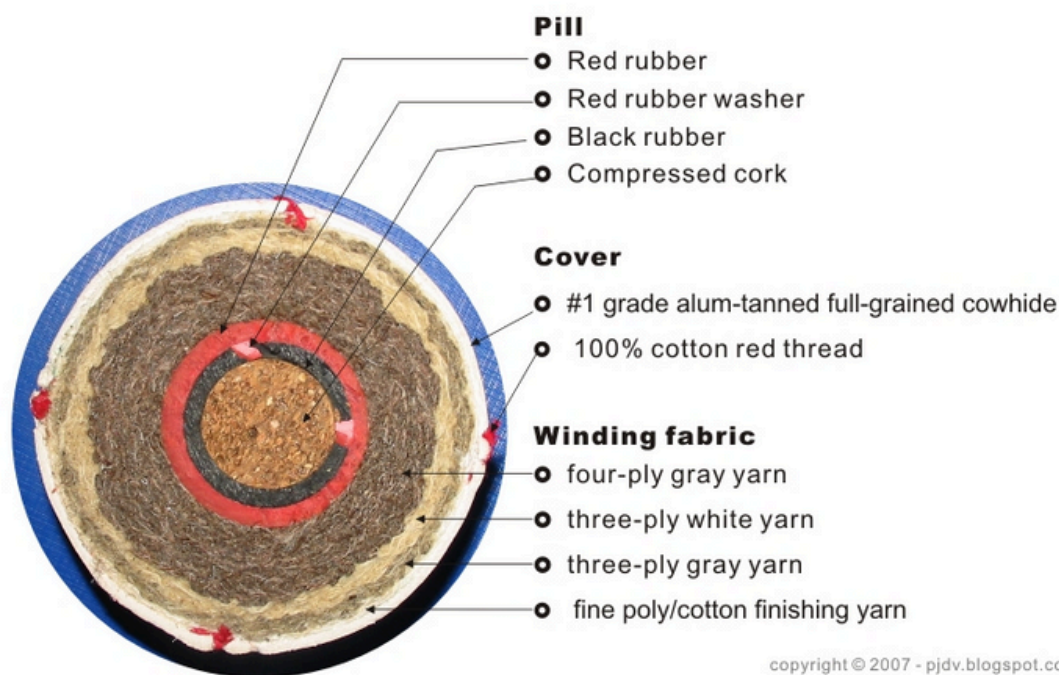
Baseball is Back and Agriculture is a big part!

What are baseballs made out of?

Baseballs must consist of a core made of cork and rubber, or similar material, which is wrapped in wool yarn and covered with cowhide or horsehide.

Baseball Bats are made with Ash Trees that grow in PA or New York. Ash trees grow 40-50 years before they reach the right diameter. One ash tree can yield 60 bats. Other bats are made of maple, birch, and bamboo.

Baseball: Cross-Section Illustration



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Baseball gloves are made of top-quality leather, usually from cattle, including the padding and rawhide lacings.

Agriculture is a huge part of baseball!

BERKS COUNTY AG FACT

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Poultry has become Berks County's largest animal industry with over **30.4 million** birds produced in 2022

Source: https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_County_Level/Pennsylvania/st42_2_001_001.pdf



CONTACT US OR STOP BY!

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www.berskpa.gov/departments/agriculture