March 24-27 Extension to Hold 2015 NNY Spring Beef Week Programs; Focus on New Commingling Project

Cornell Cooperative Extension will hold 2015 NNY Spring Beef Week programs in Canton, Malone, Watertown and Westport to help farmers better understand what beef buyers want and how to produce a consistent supply of cattle that meet their demand.

The programs will also talk about a project underway in Northern New York, and statewide, to begin pooling feeder calves into groups. The goal of the new project is to increase feeder calf price by 10 to 15 cents over the sale barn price for cattle sold the same day.

Beef Week organizer Betsy Hodge, a livestock specialist with CCE St. Lawrence County, says, ‘Cattle prices are high right now and regional producers want to know if there are things they can do to better capture and sustain a viable market into the future.’

Hodge says the regional project will work with up to five producers interested in improving sales prices by adjusting some farm practices to commingle their beef animals to provide the quality and number of animals buyers want in one sales lot.

An example of farm practices that influence the successful pooling of animals are grouping by size and grade with all participating producers following the same weaning and vaccination protocols.

Using a common language to describe the various types of cattle is also an important tool known as grading. The NNY Spring Beef Week programs will help farmers understand and identify the different grades of cattle. Participants will learn what grades buyers want and have the opportunity to see different grades and try their eye at grading calves in a video presentation.

‘USDA feeder cattle grading systems require producers to use a common language for describing the various types of cattle. In some cases, buyers make purchases without seeing the cattle and based on grading description alone, relying on that grading to predict feedlot performance and the expected finished product,’ says Ron Kuck, a dairy and livestock educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension Jefferson County.

‘A grading system is helpful not only for marketing cattle, but also for evaluating the quality of the breeding program on each farm,’ adds Terri Taraska, D.V.M. and dairy specialist with Cornell Cooperative Extension Lewis County.

Taraska, Kuck, and Steve Ledoux, a local foods and livestock educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension Jefferson County, were recently trained in cattle training by a USDA grader. They will instruct at the 2015 NNY Spring Beef Week programs.

The 2015 NNY Spring Beef Week programs will be held:
. **Tuesday, March 24, 6:30pm: Westport**, CCE of Essex County office, 3 Sisco Street, register with Anita Deming, 518-962-4810, ald6@cornell.edu
. **Wednesday, March 25, 6:30pm: Malone**, USDA Building, 151 Finney Boulevard, register with Diane Dumont, 518-483-7403, drd9@cornell.edu

. **Thursday, March 26, 6:30pm: Canton**, CCE St. Lawrence Extension Learning Farm, 2043 State Hwy 68, register with Betsy Hodge, 315-379-9192, bmf9@cornell.edu

. **Friday, March 27, 6:30pm, Watertown**, CCE Jefferson County, 203 N. Hamilton Street, register with Ron Kuck, 315-788-8450, rak76@cornell.edu.

The 2012 Census of Agriculture data shows the region with 12,077 beef cows and 932 farms producing beef animals in Northern New York. Find more information about livestock production online at www.ccenny.com.