NEWS FROM EXTENSION

Wood County | *March 2024*

Introducing Natural Resources Groundwater Educator, Jen McNelly!

Hello! My name is Jen McNelly and I am the new Natural Resources Groundwater Educator for Wood County and the Central Wisconsin region.

I started my position in early February 2024 and have been working to get to know the Counties and other partners. We have been discussing their needs and wants surrounding groundwater, outreach, and education.

I am a graduate of UW-Stevens Point, earning my bachelors of science in environmental education and interpretation and then going on to complete a masters of science in watershed management.

After graduation, I worked at the Center for Watershed Science and Education at UW-SP assisting local water related non-profits, writing lake management plans and completing air and water quality inventories for the National Park Service.

Before joining Extension I spent the previous nine years in Portage County as the Water Resource Specialist dealing with all things groundwater and drinking water related. Water resources are truly my passion.

I'm looking forward to using these skills and experiences to on the work being done with groundwater issues throughout Central WI.

When I'm not working, I'm busy enjoying outdoor activities and travelling with my husband and two daughters.

I look forward to serving the residents and communities of Wood County and Central Wisconsin. If you ever see opportunities for collaboration, please feel free to reach out to me at Jennifer.mcnelly@wisc.edu or 715-421-8438

Robotic Milking Interest

Matt Lippert, Agriculture Educator

It has been 23 years since North America's first robotic milking system was installed at Knigge Dairy in Omro, Wisconsin. This was once viewed as expensive, high maintenance and experimental. However, dairy farmers are now finding extreme difficulty in hiring adequate labor and families are seeking to have more flexibility in their work life. Industry knowledge about these systems has moved robotic milking to be widely adapted in the industry.

Robotics, while still expensive, are neutral as far as not requiring extremely large herds for implementation Large herds have adapted robotic milking as well. Installations of as many as 20 robots, serving over 1200 cows, can be found in Central Wisconsin. Technically, automated milking systems (AMS) have led the way for other automated systems such as feed push up, feed mixing, calf feeding to find their way into many aspects on dairy farms.

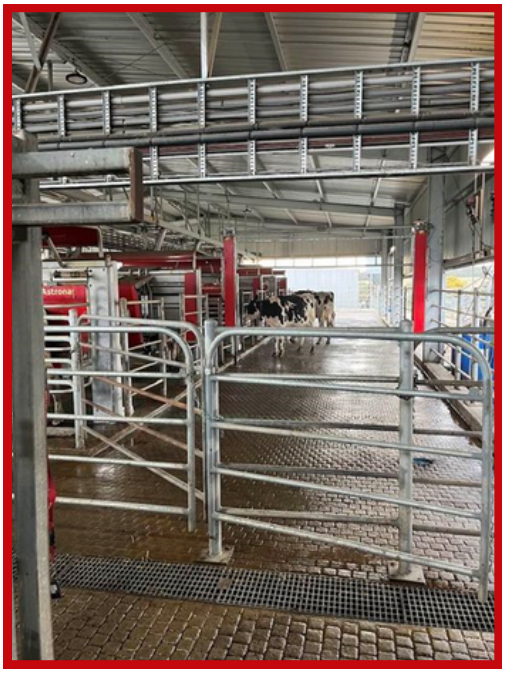
Extension continues to assist this modernization and technology adaptation process by sponsoring open houses on robotic dairies, implementing robotic users groups to help create peer groups to improve utilization of this technology, other meetings with guest speakers from Europe where the technology is more widely available, and developing surveys to better understand issues such as increased cost of feeding cows on robotic dairies.

A pair of robotic related meetings will be held on April 9th in Curtiss and Wausau. One will be an open house on a dairy and the other will be a initial meeting to encourage peer groups of robotic users. Matt Lippert is involved with both meetings.

For more information about the Automated Milking Systems User Group meetings, visit: https://dairy.extension.wisc.edu/programs/ams-user-group/

This feed pusher saves the labor of someone pushing the feed back up to the cows.

Robots are set up to be easy to clean and harvest high quality milk..



This robotic center is set up for a grazing dairy.