

LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY SLAUGHTERING AND MARKETING SESSION

by Polly Weigand



The first of many District coordinated educational programs offered in 2014 was a Livestock and Poultry Slaughtering and Marketing session as part of the Long Island Agricultural Forum. The Livestock industry on Long Island is thriving and expanding, however legal marketing to regional restaurants and shops requires slaughter at a USDA Certified slaughter house. Unfortunately, there are no regionally certified slaughtering facilities which results in off-island transport of livestock as far as Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island to achieve a commercially saleable and marketable product.

This program was very well received with over 30 industries, non-profit, and agency representatives in attendance. Ms. Kathleen Harris, Processing Coordinator, Northeast Livestock Processing Service Company, initiated the program by informing managers of the Challenges and Opportunities with livestock slaughtering while highlighting the Federal and State slaughtering and processing regulations. Matt LeRoux, an Ag Marketing Specialist with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, shared strategies for Marketing Poultry and Livestock to help advance sales and profits of high value and quality products. Equally important, this event successfully served as a round-table forum bringing together and engaging key government agencies, non-profit organizations, livestock slaughter specialists, and regional livestock managers to discuss and assess the current opportunities and needs of the industry in order to help advance the establishment of regional infrastructure.



LONG ISLAND ON-FARM COMPOSTING WORKSHOP

by Polly Weigand

To continue the education series on ways to protect water quality and improve soil health, a two day Long Island On-Farm Compost Workshop and Tour was hosted in cooperation with NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Environmental Finance Center, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service and presented by the Cornell Waste Management Institute and the NYS DEC. The basics of composting, feedstocks and processing, quality control, regulations, soil/

compost production interactions, natural rendering, mortality composting, and the troubleshooting of common compost problems were presented on the first day with tours of the Riverhead NYS DOT Deer Mortality Composting Facility, Warner Nursery, Browder's Birds Pastured Poultry Farm, Shinn Estate Vineyard and the Southold Town Compost Facility held on the second day. This workshop complemented the summer soil health programming as the applications of composting materials and compost handling and management are the most effective ways to increase soil health and limit leaching of both nutrients and pesticides from Long Island's sandy loams. However, if not conducted properly the process of composting can itself become a resource concern. Over 70 agricultural and horticultural industry representatives as well as agency staff and the public attended this workshop.



XERCES POLLINATOR SHORT COURSE

by Polly Weigand

The continuing decline of pollinating species is well documented and not limited only to the iconic Monarch butterfly but extends to other native invertebrates. Butterflies, bees, wasps, and flies are all pollinating invertebrates and while small and generally discrete, they are a major driver of the food web, providing ecological pollination services for fruit and vegetable production. Native pollinators have most recently been identified as serving a crucial economic role in providing pollination services in place of the declining European honey bee. This service provided by our native pollinators helps ensure high agricultural production and quality, as much of our agricultural produce such as melons, tomatoes, peaches, apples, and blueberries are dependent on insect pollination. However protection of these declining native species hinges on increased public awareness and education as well as the protection and expansion of pollinator habitats.

To aid in increasing the awareness of the importance of native pollinators, the District hosted two Xerces Pollinator Short Courses to sold out audiences in the spring and fall, thanks in part to funding provided by NYS SWCC, Xerces Institute for Invertebrate Conservation and the District. Scientifically-based research on the agronomic and economic benefits offered by native pollinators, the principles of pollinator biology, and an array of best management agronomic practices critical to the protection and support of these vital insects was provided during the full day event. The District thanks Bedell Cellars for hosting the first of the two workshops which expanded the focus of the program by enabling them to highlight their pollinator habitat protection activities. In addition, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County and the USDA-NRCS staff were recognized for being guest speakers at both events, which lended to further support this invaluable and irreplaceable group of species.