

Ag Notes

Harford County Newsletter

UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND
EXTENSION

October 2025

University of
Maryland Extension

Harford County
Agricultural Center

Suite 600
3525 Conowingo Rd.
Street, MD 21154
(410) 638-3255

M—F 8:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

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Hello, Harford County!

Rains have been a welcome return as of late—we were getting quite dry after only trace amounts of rain for the entire month of August. Dry conditions present a fire hazard, and if you remember last year's harvest we had several scares and total losses in our community related to fires. Already this harvest season we have had a couple of close calls.

Fall harvest is one of the busiest—and most hazardous—times of the year on farms. Dry conditions, combustible crop residues, and long hours in the field create an environment where fires can start and spread quickly. Equipment such as combines, tractors, and grain dryers are especially vulnerable. Taking precautions now can prevent costly and dangerous fires.

Common Fire Risks:

- **Combines and Tractors:** Accumulated crop residue on hot engine parts, bearings, or belts can ignite. Electrical wiring and worn bearings are also potential ignition sources.
- **Grain Dryers:** High temperatures, fine dust, and constant operation increase the risk of fire during drying season. Improper maintenance or overloading can worsen the hazard.
- **Fuel Storage and Refueling:** Spilled fuel or careless smoking around equipment is a common ignition source.

As a reminder, here are some prevention tips:

- Clean equipment daily to remove dust, residue, and crop debris from engines, mufflers, and bearings.
- Check wiring, belts, and bearings regularly for wear and overheating.
- Keep fully charged ABC fire extinguishers on each combine, tractor, and service vehicle. A water extinguisher or pressurized water, as well as tillage tools, can also be helpful for crop residue field fires.
- Allow grain dryers time to cool down before shutting off fans. Ideally they should not be unattended while in operation, but that is not always possible. Consider early-warning monitor systems (new technology can be linked to your phone to monitor the dryer from anywhere).
- Refuel only when engines are off and cool.
- When possible, create defensible space around grain facilities by mowing weeds and keeping the area free of clutter.

Fires can spread rapidly in dry fall conditions. A few minutes of maintenance and vigilance can help protect your equipment, your crop, and your safety this harvest season.

Until next time,
-Andy



New World Screwworm

Erika Crowl, Senior Agriculture Agent Associate
University of Maryland Extension, Baltimore County

Since the 1960s, the New World Screwworm (NWS) has been declared eradicated from the United States although there was still a large population in Mexico and Central America. Depending on the winds and weather, we could still see the pest show up here in the US, mainly in Texas and Florida. Recently, there has been a resurgence of the Screwworm in Mexico which led to the closure of livestock trade through the U.S. Southern Border Ports from May 11 to September 15, 2025.

In June, USDA launched a plan to combat NWS by protecting the borders, increasing eradication efforts, and increasing awareness. The plan can be found on <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/nws-visit-policy-brief.pdf>.

The New World Screwworm is simply a blowfly; a metallic-blue parasitic fly with three dark stripes along its back. The larvae (maggots) of the screwworm feed on the wounds of warm-blooded animals. These larvae burrow into the wound causing extensive damage by tearing apart the tissue with their sharp mouth hooks. Once the larvae feed on the flesh for about a week, they will fall to the ground to burrow in the soil and mature. The mature screwworm will emerge and mate 3-5 days later.

It is important to take proactive steps to protect your animals from the Screwworm. MDA has released preventative measures which include:

- Inspecting wounds for signs of fly eggs or larvae
- Clean and treat wounds immediately
- Implement a good fly control program using repellants, traps, and insecticides
- Quarantine all new arrivals before introducing them to the herd.

Animals suffering from the infestation may exhibit the following signs:

- Bloody drainage from a cut or wound
- White or cream-colored runny substance in or around a wound
- Presence of maggots in wounds
- Fever or reduced appetite

If screwworms are suspected, contact the Maryland State Veterinarian immediately. Her office number is (410) 841-5810 or after hours, she can be reached at (410) 841-5971.



Cost-Share for Manure Transport

Maryland Department of Agriculture [press release](#)

The Maryland Department of Agriculture is reminding farmers that cost-share funding is available to help cover expenses associated with hauling all types of manure to fall-planted crop fields with acceptable soil phosphorus levels. Additionally, grants are available to offset costs related to injecting liquid manure into the soil in order to prevent nutrient runoff and reduce odors.

All fall livestock manure transport and injection projects must be completed by December 15, 2025. Claims for payment should be submitted to the department's Conservation Grants Office by January 15, 2026. Claims for poultry manure must be submitted within 40 days of the final transport.

Program highlights include:

- Receive up to \$28/ton to transport poultry manure to qualifying fields with acceptable soil phosphorus levels or alternative use projects that can safely utilize the product.
- Cost-share grants are available to transport dairy



and livestock manure to qualifying fields, covering up to 87.5% of eligible costs.

- FastTrack and standard transport options are available for both poultry and dairy/livestock manure.

- Farmers can receive up to \$45/acre for costs associated with injecting liquid manure into the soil. However, please note that poultry manure is not eligible for this option due to its low moisture content.

If you want to apply for FastTrack (haul now, apply later) grants for poultry and dairy/livestock manure, you can download the application from the [website](#). If you don't qualify for FastTrack, you can contact your local [soil conservation district](#) to apply for the standard grants which require pre-approval before manure is transported or injected.

The Department's Conservation Grants Program administers manure transport and injection grants. Applicants must be in good standing with the program and in compliance with Maryland's nutrient management regulations. Need help finding a poultry manure source? Follow the link for a listing of [poultry manure brokers](#).

For more information, please contact the Manure Management Program at (410) 841-5864.

Livestock

BEERS & STEERS

PRESENTED BY:

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION

OCTOBER 9, 2025
5PM-7PM
\$15

JOIN US FOR A NIGHT TO LEARN ABOUT DIFFERENT CUTS OF MEAT, DECODING THE LABEL, TASTE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GRAIN-FINISHED, GRASS-FED, AND DRY-AGED BEEF, AND MORE!

THIS IS A TICKETED EVENT; REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. DRINKS CAN BE PURCHASED SEPARATELY AT THE EVENT.

TICKETS: [HTTPS://BIT.LY/2025BEERSANDSTEEERS](https://bit.ly/2025beersandsteers)

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT ERIKA CROWL AT 410-887-8090 OR ECROWL@UMD.EDU

THIS INSTITUTION IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER.

Fall Migration Brings Increased Risk of HPAI

Maryland Department of Agriculture [press release](#)

With the fall migration underway, the Maryland Department of Agriculture is urging all poultry farmers to review and implement enhanced biosecurity plans. This comes after the confirmation of HPAI in a backyard flock in Anne Arundel County, marking the first such case since spring of 2025.

“As we transition into the fall season, Maryland faces a heightened risk of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). Our state experienced an unprecedented surge in detections earlier this year, underscoring the urgent need for enhanced vigilance,” said Secretary Kevin Atticks. “For our dedicated poultry farmers, biosecurity isn’t just a recommendation; it is, unequivocally, the most effective defense against HPAI. Proactive measures, stringent protocols, and unwavering adherence to best practices are essential to safeguard our flocks, protect our agricultural economy, and ensure the continued health of Maryland’s poultry industry.”

Migratory waterfowl moving through Maryland presents a heightened risk for HPAI, a devastating disease for poultry operations. HPAI is caused by an influenza type A virus, which can infect poultry (chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quails, domestic ducks, geese, and guinea fowl) and is carried by free flying waterfowl such as ducks, geese and shorebirds.

Commercial and backyard flock owners are urged to follow these guidelines to maintain a sanitary, biosecure premise:

- Restrict access to poultry by posting “Restricted Access” signage, securing the area with a gate, or both.
- Take steps to ensure that contaminated materials on the ground are not transported into the poultry growing house or area.
- Provide the following items to anyone entering or leaving any area

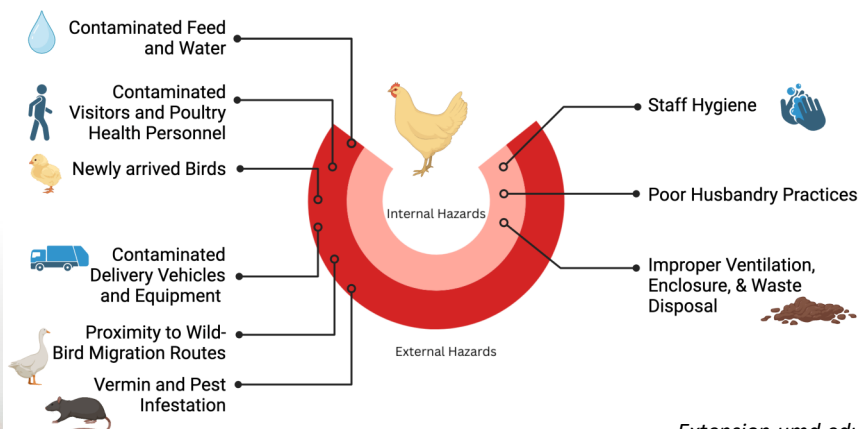
where poultry are kept:

- Footbaths and foot mats with disinfectant;
- Boot washing and disinfectant station;
- Footwear change or foot covers.
- Cover and secure feed to prevent wild birds, rodents or other animals from accessing it.
- Cover and properly contain carcasses, used litter, or other disease-containing organic materials to prevent wild birds, rodents or other animals from accessing them and to keep them from being blown around by wind.
- Allow MDA to enter the premises during normal working hours to inspect your biosecurity and sanitation practices.

Report any unusual bird deaths or sudden increases in very sick birds to the MDA Animal Health Program at (410) 841-5810 or after-hours to (410) 841-5971. Also contact the USDA at (866) 536-7593.

For more information on avian influenza, please visit the department’s [website](#) and the University of Maryland Extension [HPAI resources](#).

Risk Factors of HPAI in Commercial Poultry Flocks



Extension.umd.edu

Laws for Seasonal Workers & Winter Layoffs

Samantha Capaldo and Nicole Cook
University of Maryland, Agriculture Law Education Initiative

Employment, on many farms, is seasonal in nature. Because of this, agricultural employers and employees frequently ask questions about winter layoffs and unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. In general, seasonal agricultural employees are eligible for unemployment benefits when they are laid off in the winter and the farm can rehire the same workers in the spring. Keep reading for an overview of unemployment insurance in agriculture and eligibility for employees laid off during the winter months.

Which Agricultural Employers are Covered?

Maryland follows the federal unemployment tax liability rules for agricultural employers, which are outlined in [§8-207](#) of the Maryland Labor Code. Agricultural employers must pay unemployment insurance taxes to the state if they meet one of the following criteria:

1. If the employer paid cash wages of \$20,000 to individuals performing agricultural work during a calendar quarter of the current or preceding calendar year, OR
2. If the employer employs at least 10 individuals in agricultural work for a part of a day in each of 20 consecutive or nonconsecutive weeks during the current or preceding calendar year.

If you meet at least one of the criteria, you must register for a Maryland UI employer account, file quarterly wage reports, pay UI contributions, and comply with new-hire and rehire reporting requirements. However, if you do not meet one of the criteria and still want your seasonal workers protected by unemployment insurance, you can voluntarily elect coverage.

When are Employees Eligible?

To be eligible for unemployment benefits in Maryland, the employee must have been laid off through no fault of their own, have earned sufficient wages in covered employment during the [base period](#), and meet ongoing weekly requirements. Weekly requirements include:

1. You must be able and available to work during every week you are claiming benefits;
2. You must be actively searching for work, unless an exception applies;

3. You must file a weekly claim certification through BEACON, the mobile app, or by telephone; and
4. If you are offered suitable work, you must accept the offer, unless you refuse for good cause, which is determined by the Maryland Division of Unemployment.

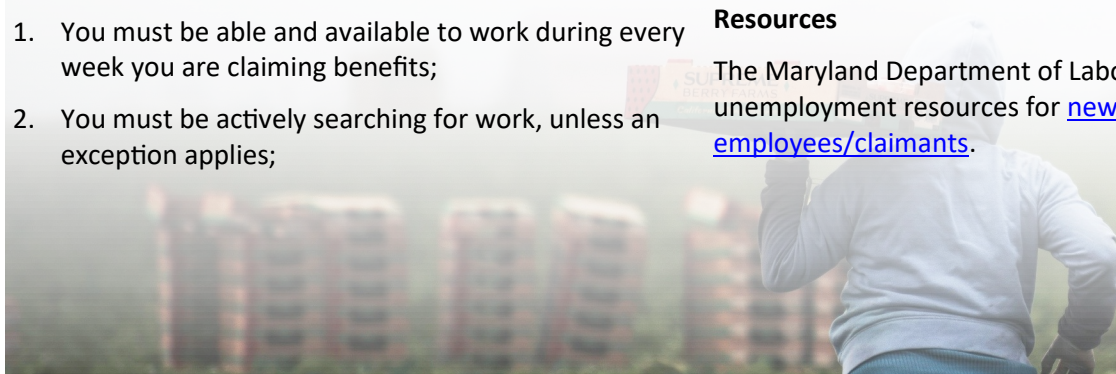
There are two exceptions to the “actively searching for work” requirement in Maryland. For temporary layoffs lasting ten weeks or less, workers are exempt from the requirement to actively search for work if the employer provides a definite return-to-work date within the ten-week period. For longer layoffs, between eleven and twenty-six weeks, with a definite return-to-work date, the employer and employee can both request an exemption from the requirement to actively search for work from the Maryland Labor Secretary, as long as the layoff is not due to vacation, inventory, or a labor dispute.

Recordkeeping

Agricultural employers may lay off seasonal workers at the end of the growing or harvesting season, when there is no longer work available on the farm. It is important to report the layoff as seasonal or end-of-season and include the last day worked, to ensure proper coding for unemployment insurance purposes. The same workers may be re-hired at the start of the next planting or growing season. If an employer intends to rehire the same employee, they should record and provide the layoff date and recall date to the employee applying for unemployment insurance benefits. When a former seasonal employee is rehired, the employer must follow the same reporting rules for new hires, including reporting the hire to the Maryland State Directory of New Hires within twenty days of the employee’s first day working. Once employees are rehired, employers must resume including the employee’s wages in their quarterly unemployment insurance wage report.

Resources

The Maryland Department of Labor provides unemployment resources for [new employers](#) and for [employees/claimants](#).



Upcoming Pesticide Testing & Training

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A **recertification training** for current private pesticide applicators will be held **November 13, 2025** from 1pm-3pm at the Harford County Extension Office, 3525 Conowingo Rd, Street, MD 21154.

The **private applicator exam** will be given through the Harford County Extension Office on **November 13th** from 9-11am. You may pick up a copy of the Maryland Pesticide Core Manual from the Extension office to use as a study guide for the exam. The cost of the manual is \$20.00. A free, self-paced training module is available on our website to help you prepare for the exam: <https://umeagfs.teachable.com/p/private-pesticide-applicators-optional-training>. Alternatively, an in-person exam prep class will be held at the Extension office on **November 6**, 9-11am.

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED!

Please call the Harford County Extension Office to register (410) 638-3255, or e-mail akness@umd.edu.

Mid-Atlantic Crop Management School



November 18 – 20, 2025

Princess Royale Oceanfront Resort, Ocean City, MD

On behalf of the planning committee, we are pleased to announce that the registration for 2025 Mid-Atlantic Crop Management School is live and can be found at <http://go.umd.edu/25crop>, as well as the full program [agenda](#).

Crop School offers a 2 ½-day in person format with a variety of breakout sessions. Individuals needing Certified Crop Advisor training in soil and water, nutrient management, crop management, and pest management can create their own schedule by choosing from 5 program options offered each hour.

Emphasis is placed on new and advanced information with group discussion and interaction encouraged.

Early bird registration is \$350 through October 24th then registration increases to \$410 through November 8th. Payment of the registration fee entitles you to participation in 2½ days of sessions, materials, 3 continental breakfasts, 2 lunches, and refreshment breaks.

Any questions regarding the event can be directed to Nicole Fiorellino (nfiorell@umd.edu) or Amy Shober (ashober@udel.edu).

Seed Treatments for Small Grains

*David Owens, Entomology Extension Specialist
University of Delaware*

Small grains will soon be planted in our area. Wheat varieties have varying levels of resistance to Barley Yellow Dwarf Virus (BYDV). This disease is spread by aphids like the bird cherry oat aphid and English grain aphid. The disease is not always present, and for many years it was almost entirely absent in our small grains. Management is aimed at reducing the potential for aphids to spread the disease, and especially with secondary spread throughout a field. Neonic seed treatments are an option, and probably more important in barley. Other aphid materials include Sivanto, Transform, and Sefina. Of those, Sivanto and Transform probably have the longest residual activity. In Barley only we can use Endigo which has a neonic in it.

Forestry Webinars

This webinar series explores aspects of Maryland's forests and natural resources. Each session will cover the basics of concepts linked to Maryland's forests, then highlight recent, relevant research advancing the field. Each session will be hosted from noon-1pm. Contact Daniel Pratson at dpratson@umd.edu for more information or accommodation requests.

October 8. Deep Roots: Understanding Maryland's Forests, go.umd.edu/OctForests2025

November 12. Woodlands 101: Forest Dynamics, go.umd.edu/NovForests2025

December 10: Forests and Culture: Human Dimensions of Forest Stewardship, go.umd.edu/DecForests2025

Scholarship

The Farm Credit Foundation for Agricultural Advancement is awarding at least 20 scholarships, each valued at up to \$10,000, to students dedicated to pursuing a career in agriculture. Scholarships are awarded to those demonstrating academic success, leadership qualities, and a strong commitment to agriculture.

Applications are open to high school seniors and those currently enrolled in two- or four-year higher education programs or technical schools. To be eligible, applicants must reside within Horizon Farm Credit's 100-county territory or in Washington, D.C. and have a clear commitment to a career in agriculture.

Applications are being accepted online now through **January 3, 2025**, and scholarships will be awarded in April 2026. For more information and to apply, please visit FCFoundationforAg.org or email info@FCFoundationforAg.org

Harford County Ag and Boating Plastic Recycling

Acceptable Items

- Boat Wrap with ropes and doors removed
- Debris-Free White Bale Wrap
- Black and White Silage Bags and Bunker Covers Without Twine
- Polypropylene Baler Twine With Colors Separated
- Supersacs and #4 Feed Bags
- Clear Stretch Wrap and Greenhouse Covers
- Clean and Bundled Drip Tap Separated From Field Mulch
- Polystyrene Greenhouse Trays Separated and Stacked

Unacceptable Items

- Boat wrap with ropes and doors
- Sweet Corn Cover
- Black Field Mulch
- Comingled Drip Tape
- Dairy Bio Gloves and Medical Supplies
- Residential Trash

Please Note

This program is for Harford County farms and residents only. All plastics should be as clean as possible and stored under cover to minimize moisture. Twine **MUST** be separated from bale wrap, and absolutely **NO TRASH** is allowed. Thank you for your cooperation.

For more information or to schedule a drop off, please contact the Harford County Office of Recycling at **410.636.3417** or harfordrecycles.menv.com



ROBERT G. CASSILLY
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Great resources are just a click away!

Andrew Kness

Andrew Kness
Senior Extension Agent,
Agriculture and
Food Systems



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Back-issues can be found at: <https://extension.umd.edu/locations/harford-county/agriculture-and-nutrient-management>

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If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate in any event or activity, please contact the University of Maryland Extension office at least two weeks prior to the event.

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Dates to remember

- 09 Oct.** Beers and Steers. 5-7 PM, Inverness Brewery, Monkton, MD. \$15. Register at bit.ly/2025beersandsteers or call (410) 887-8090.
- 06 Nov.** Optional training for new pesticide applicators. 1-3 PM, Harford County Extension Office. Free. Register by calling (410) 638-3255 or email akness@umd.edu.
- 13 Nov.** Private Pesticide Applicator Exam. 9-11 AM, Harford County Extension Office. Free. Register by calling (410) 638-3255 or email akness@umd.edu.
- 13 Nov.** Private Pesticide Applicator Recertification Training. 1-3 PM, Harford County Extension Office. Free. Register by calling (410) 638-3255 or email akness@umd.edu.
- 03 Dec.** Northern Maryland Field Crops Day. 8-12:30 PM, Hereford Fire Hall. Registration details to come.

October 2025