

AG QUARTERLY

January 2026



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 dedicated to ensuring a thriving agricultural industry in Berks County.

Credits

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

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Berks County Department of Ag Staff with Governor Shapiro, Secretary of Agriculture Redding and other PA State Farmland Preservation Administrators at the PA State 650,000-acre Farmland Preservation Celebration. Photo credit: PA Dept of Ag



Heindel Farms - Seidel Family Settlement # 9

Excerpts from "Genetics Breeds Success" by Clyde A. B. Myers as published in the Reading Eagle.



- Heindel Farms is 118 acres in Heidelberg Township operated by the Seidel Family and was the 9th farm preserved in Berks County.
- The farm, purchased by George & Grace Seidel in the early 1960s, started as a dairy operation focused on genetics, with the addition of the second generation - Glenn and wife Jane.
- Heindel Farms currently grows corn and soybeans and daughter Rebecca manages the pasture, breeding a line of grass-fed Ayrshire heifers in addition to beef animals.
- Glenn, a longtime board member for the Berks County Conservation District and avid conservationist, passed away in 2024.

Jane Seidel on their decision to preserve their farm in 1991, "We understood the value of prime agricultural land as once it's lost, it's lost forever."

Please see our website for full articles on preserved farms.

AG LAND PRESERVATION STATS

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2025 Report



846
Farms
Preserved

80365.7
Acres
Preserved

2025 Totals:

Farms preserved: **15**

Acres preserved: **1051.60**

Program Total:

County invested: **\$86.1M**

State invested: **\$96.8M**

Landowner Donated Value: **\$42.4M**

The Berks County Department of Agriculture oversees the administration of the Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACE) Program, which permanently preserves Berks County's farmland. Berks County is a leader in both the state and the nation for preserved farms and celebrated the 80,000+ acres of forever farmland milestone in June of 2025.

Q3 HIGHLIGHTS

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Ag & Natural Resources Career & Job Fair

The Berks County Department of Agriculture held our annual Agriculture and Natural Resources Career & Job Fair on November 13th at the Leesport Farmers Market. The over 200 attending students and job seekers connected with 40 exhibitors from colleges and universities, government agencies, and local agribusinesses to learn about the diverse careers in agriculture and related industries. Attendees explored career options, and connected with employers for potential job options, internships, and job shadowing. This was the 14th year for the event, which continues to grow.



Farm Tire Collection

On November 20th the Department held a farm tire collection at Allegheny Towing and Salvage Co. in Birdsboro, with support from the Berks County Conservation District. The main purpose of the collection was to reduce breeding areas for mosquitos and help alleviate the financial burden for farmers to dispose of used farm tires. In total 54,700 lbs. (27.35 tons) of large tractor and truck tires were collected. Many of the tires will be recycled to make rubber playground mulch.



Superintendent's Day

In conjunction with the BCIU, The Department of Ag brought Berks County school district superintendents to tour FM Brown's Flour mill and Unique Snacks. This annual event is designed to showcase the diversity and technology of the agriculture industry and stress the importance of agriculture careers and required skills. It also helps foster a relationship with our education system and provides an opportunity to promote ag education and other events.

R-BAR Advocacy Breakfast

The Berks County Dept of Ag joined the Reading-Berks Association of Realtors to present at their annual breakfast on October 14th. Local realtors were educated on the Growing Berks Plan and how agriculture works with other land uses to support the county's economy and attract more people to the area.



BBEC Student Visits

The Department collaborated with the Berks Business Education Coalition to welcome high school students from the Conrad Weiser, Reading and Schuylkill Valley school districts to discuss careers in agriculture. Students heard from staff from the Department of Agriculture, County Conservation District, and Penn State Extension, did an ag related activity, and toured the Master Gardener's extensive gardens.

OUR WORK IN NUMBERS

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2025 Q4 Online Presence

Our staff continue to promote agriculture and share resources with thousands of Berks County residents via Facebook, the online Local Food Map, and the Berks Ag Event Calendar.

20,674	GrowTogether Website Users
22,559	Food Map & Events Calendar Views
265	Local Farms & Vendors Listed on Food Map
124	AgEvents on Calendar
81,921	Facebook Page Views
100	Facebook Posts



2025 Fourth Quarter Event Impact

329	Students, Teachers, and Superintendents provided Ag Career information at events.
500+	Informational Literature and promotional handed out at events
2	Berks County Dairy Princess rides on a zamboni for Ag Night at the Reading Royals.

2025 OBJECTIVES

Fourth Quarter Update

Our team has continued to make key advances on our annual objectives in 2025.

Promote Ag Career Pathways.

- Hosted 65 students at Ag Center and presented hand-on activities related to Ag Careers.
- Discussed Ag career opportunities at Muhlenberg High School Career Fair for students in grades 10 -12.

Encourage Business Market Expansion

- Partnered with Experience Reading and Berks County to offer special membership rates for Grow Together participants.

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

- Participated in 5 Farm Bureau events to build our relationship and aid in extending our messaging.
- Attended 12 events organized by Berks Nature, PSU Extension, CELG and Planning Commission.
- Sponsored supplies and offered hands-on demonstration to 18th Wonder gardeners on how to extend harvest season.

Supported Land Use and Land Security.

- Secured Agricultural Conservation Easements settlements on 7 farms totaling 461.9 acres
- Conducted Stewardship Visits on 123 farms in the ACE Program
- Participated in the annual Municipal Officials Dinner to review department steps to enhance communication and encourage municipal leaders to reach to the office to discuss agriculture related projects and trends as they relate to zoning and ordinances
- Presented Department overview to Berks County Planning Commission.



**Berks County
Department of Agriculture
GROWING BERKS
FOCUS AREAS**

Want to know more?

**Don't hesitate to reach out!
we'd love to hear from you.**

Some Areas of Berks County in HPAI Surveillance Area

HPAI (Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza) Detected in Surrounding Counties

Some areas in Berks County are currently in a surveillance area according to PADLS's Control Area Address Checker. This comes after confirmed detections in Lancaster County. Commercial farms are required to test in these areas to limit the possible spread of HPAI.

Though HPAI can infect humans, the CDC states the current outbreak poses low risk to the general public. People should avoid contact with wild birds and their droppings.

Sick livestock including chickens, turkeys, or other birds contact:

PA Bureau of Animal Health and Diagnostic Services

24/7 hotline 717-772-2852 option1

leave a message for the veterinarian- they will call you back

Sick or dead wild birds contact:

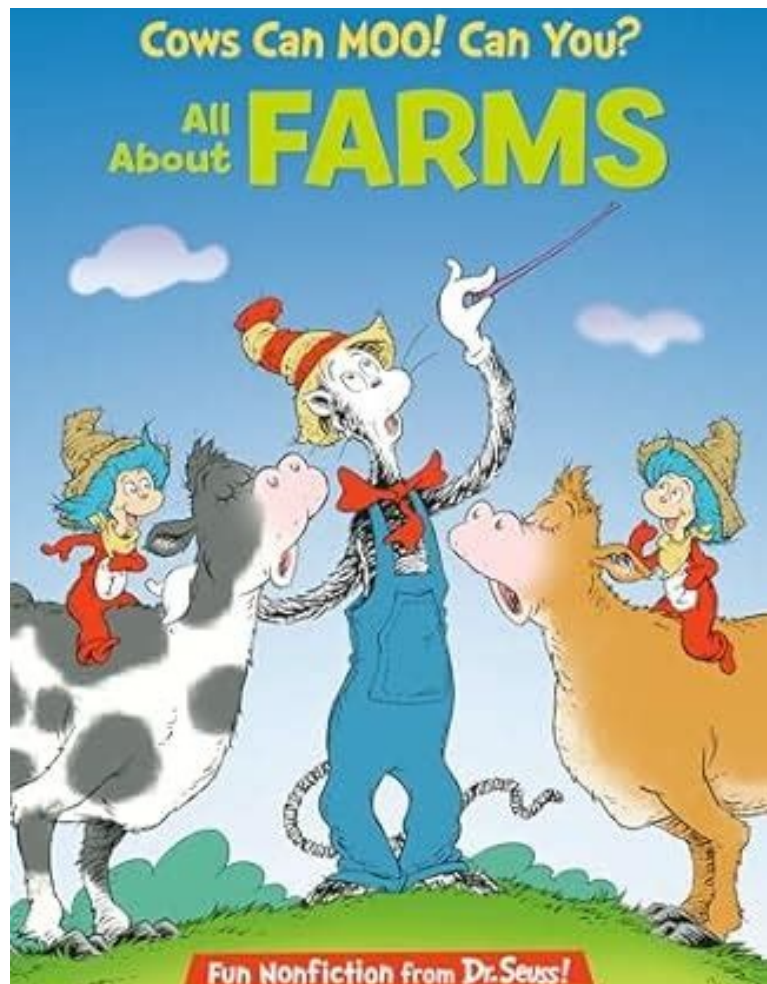
PA Game Commission at 833-742-4868 or

pgc-wildlifehealth@pa.gov

To check your area, please visit:

<https://padeptag.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=a9066a3d68a443a08043766cb84bf4ae>





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

National Ag Day | March 17, 2026

Audience: Members of the public

Description: A lecture and tour featuring hex signs in the Kutztown area by Patrick Donmoyer.

Partners: Kutztown German Heritage Center, Experience Reading Berks County, America 250PA Berks

Ag Literacy Week| March 16-20, 2026

Audience: Berks County K-2nd grade students

Description: The Department is partnering with B.A.R.N. to read an agriculturally related book with a related activity to educate elementary students on the importance of agriculture.

Partners: PA Friends of Agriculture, B.A.R.N., and local schools.

Farm Transitions & Long Term Care Workshop| March 26, 2026

Audience: Berks County farmers and their families

Description: A one-day presentation and workshop to provide farmers with information on farm transition and long-term care options and connect them with available resources.

Partners: PA Farmlink, local transition professionals

Growing Berks Update| Spring 2026

Audience: Berks County leadership and the agriculture community

Description: A one-year update on the Growing Berks Plan and how the focus areas in the Roadmap are being implemented.

Partners: Community and Economic Development, Planning Commission



CONTACT US OR STOP BY!

610-378-1844 | DeptofAg@BerksPA.gov

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Office hours: 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

www.berskpa.gov/departments/agriculture