

## Brief History of New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food

The New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food traces its origins to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when the General Court established a Board of Agriculture composed of one farmer from each of the state's 10 counties. This board initially functioned primarily as an instrument of education, regularly conducting lectures and forums on agricultural subjects around the state, and publishing each year a volume containing the texts of many of the lectures. In the 1890s the Board of Agriculture broadened its work to include efforts to rebuild the rural economy of the state, which had been devastated by national economic turmoil, heavy losses of men in the Civil War and continuing out-migration of population to urban areas and the West. The Board also began efforts to control diseases in livestock, crop pests and unscrupulous marketers of feeds and fertilizers.



The General Court in 1913 abolished the Board of Agriculture and created in its place a Department of Agriculture under the management of a commissioner of agriculture. The Department's first commissioner was Andrew L. Felker of Meredith, who in 40 years of service in the position would write many laws to protect farmers and consumers and would develop a professional staff to administer the laws.

In 1919 the Department began publication of the Weekly Market Bulletin, a compendium of market news, farm commodities for sale and information for production agriculture. The Bulletin has been published every Wednesday since, and continues to serve as a primary vehicle for communication within the state's agricultural community.

Down through the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were many significant achievements for the department, but probably foremost would be eradication of major diseases of livestock and poultry through aggressive programs of surveillance and, where necessary, condemnation. New Hampshire was the first state to completely stamp out Brucellosis in cattle and led the nation in control of various other costly diseases.

Commissioner Felker was succeeded at the helm of the Department by Perley I. Fitts of Durham, 1953-1962; Frank T. Buckley of Derry 1962-1972; Howard C. Townsend of Lebanon, 1972-1982; and Stephen H. Taylor of Plainfield, 1982-2007; and Lorraine S. Merrill of Stratham, 2007 to present.

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**New Hampshire**  
*Department of Agriculture,  
Markets & Food*