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KCA Reaches Out to Legislators and USDA to Open Haying Opportunities

Earlier this month, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that emergency haying and grazing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage was authorized in 91 Kansas Counties.

Those counties include Allen, Anderson, Barber, Barton, Bourbon, Butler, Chase, Cheyenne, Clark, Clay, Cloud, Coffey, Comanche, Cowley, Decatur, Dickinson, Douglas, Ellsworth, Edwards, Ellis, Finney, Ford, Franklin, Geary, Graham, Grant, Gray, Greenwood, Gove, Greeley, Hamilton, Harper, Harvey, Haskell, Hodgeman, Jefferson, Jewell, Johnson, Kearny, Kingman, Kiowa, Lane, Leavenworth, Lincoln, Linn, Logan, Lyon, Marion, McPherson, Meade, Miami, Mitchell, Morris, Ness, Norton, Osage, Osborne, Ottawa, Pawnee, Phillips, Pratt, Pottawatomie, Rawlins, Reno, Republic, Rice, Riley, Rooks, Rush, Russell, Saline, Scott, Sedgwick, Seward, Shawnee, Sheridan, Sherman, Smith, Stafford, Stanton, Stevens, Sumner, Thomas, Trego, Wabaunsee, Wallace, Washington, Wichita, Woodson and Wyandotte Counties.

Emergency haying in approved counties is allowed through August 15, 2012. Emergency grazing in approved counties is allowed through September 30, 2012. Emergency haying and grazing is not allowed on the same acreage, and although emergency use of CRP land helps producers, in this drought situation, it may not be enough to provide adequate relief and food sources for livestock.

"KCA received not one or two but several calls from producers around the state. Most of the calls were the same conversation. Producers do not have enough hay or good pastureland for their cattle. Farmers are worried about their crops. Folks are already selling some of their livestock. They can't find enough hay to buy. It is just a bad situation all around, and producers are looking to KCA for help. That is what we are here for, and that is what we are doing," stated KCA Executive Director Brandy Carter.

In the July FSA announcement regarding the use of CRP land, FSA noted, "Kansas has been authorized to permit emergency grazing on practice CP-25, Rare and Declining Habitat. Emergency haying is not authorized on practice CP-25."

Lee Robbins, Woodson County cattleman and former KCA president talked to KCA about the need for hay, "Due to the drought, that's possibly the worst we have seen in history, the need for forage is pertinent and immediate. Much of the CP-25 can't even be grazed because it doesn't have a water source. It also needs to be opened up for haying."

With several hundred thousands of Kansas acres enrolled in CP-25, keeping that acreage from being hayed is a tremendous detriment to producers. KCA called the state FSA office to express the needs of livestock producers. When discussing the CP-25 contract, FSA stated that CP-25 acreage has never been opened for haying. In 2008, the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) filed suit against USDA for opening up CRP land for critical feed use. In the end, the judge ordered USDA and NWF to form a compromise aimed at relieving the hardships of livestock producers and taking into consideration the environmental impact of haying and grazing. Opening up the CP-25 to allow haying may create a situation that occurred in 2008.

Although KCA understands USDA's unique position, KCA is committed to working on behalf of producers. Therefore, KCA reached out to Congressmen Huelskamp, Yoder, Pompeo and

Congresswoman Jenkins as well as Senators Moran and Roberts. KCA expressed that in many cases, grazing CRP land, such as CP-25, is not even feasible for producers. KCA staff not only brought attention to the drought and its impact on the land, but also the economic impact that the hardships take on producers and the economy. KCA expressed the need to open up additional land for haying and asked each legislator to help their constituents.

KCA will continue to work with our legislators and state agencies to bring additional awareness of conditions that the drought is causing and to bring relief to producers.

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