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Funds from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Help with Livestock Mortality

As the flood water recedes and snow melts, farmers and ranchers are getting a better look at the amount of damage their operations have suffered from last week's extreme weather events.

One of the more significant losses experienced by landowners has been livestock death. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has assistance available to help landowners cope with the aftermath of livestock death.

Through NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program, commonly referred to as EQIP, farmers and ranchers can apply for assistance to properly dispose of dead livestock. Applications are being accepted now through April 5. The second cut-off date is May 1. Additional application cutoff dates may be announced if there is demand and available funding.

NRCS State Conservationist Craig Derickson said, "This was an unprecedented and devastating event for Nebraska. Some ranchers are dealing with hundreds of dead animals. This is not only damaging to their bottom-line, but if these animals are not disposed of properly, there could be negative impacts to water quality and other natural resources. NRCS conservationists are available to provide technical and financial assistance to help producers dispose of livestock carcasses in a safe manner."

Producers who have not already disposed of livestock can apply for EQIP now. Producers can then get a waiver to allow them to begin working to dispose of deceased livestock before having an approved EQIP contract.

"Typically, producers cannot begin working on an EQIP practice before their EQIP contract has been approved. But since this situation is so time-critical, NRCS is encouraging producers to sign up for EQIP first, then submit a waiver to go ahead and begin animal disposal prior to having their EQIP contract approved," Derickson said.

Producers in the area who suffered other damages due to the blizzard and flooding – such as damaged fencing, water sources, or windbreaks – may also seek assistance from NRCS through general EQIP funding. The sign-up period for general EQIP is continuous and has no cut off application date.

Derickson said, "NRCS is committed to helping producers get back on their feet after these extreme weather events while also ensuring Nebraska's natural

environment remains healthy and productive."

For more information about the programs and assistance available from NRCS, visit your local USDA Service Center or www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov.