



Contact Information
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February 9, 2023

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency
Zach Ducheneaux- Administrator
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC, 20250-0506

Dear Administrator Ducheneaux,

Thank you for the work you and your agency do for agriculture. FSA has been vital for ranchers and farmers throughout the country through many natural disasters and challenges in the agriculture sector. We are writing to you today to inform you of weather conditions which are severely impacting the livestock industry this winter in the Western States. We're hoping we can partner again to relieve an increasing problem this winter in the West.

This winter has been particularly hard for livestock producers in the Western United States. The winter season started early and we have heard reports from producers that they were forced to commence much higher levels of supplemental feed and will need to sustain these operations for a longer period than at any time in recent memory. Feed resources have been limited and expensive as well, compounding the problem and resulting in significant increases in cost. Most have had to pay much more for supplemental feed and have had to purchase more of that feed just to sustain livestock. Many herds have been trucked out of traditional winter grazing areas, but access by truck due to drifting snow is hampering efforts to reach and remove remaining livestock. Mortality has been high thus far and is expected to increase well into the spring as a result of this exceptionally harsh winter. Animal performance will be severely hampered this year at the very least.

The persistence of snow has created severe difficulties for our producers. As you may be aware, this winter has been much colder and windier than usual. We simply have not seen snow melt between events and plant resources remain buried even with high winds. Many producers have been forced to truck livestock closer to their respective home places to even maintain contact. As you are well aware, this is not feasible for all operators and for many herds, home is the range. Snow removal has become a critical operation to keep animals alive. Access to traditional winter grazing resources has become dire as well. A large portion of grazing lands in the West are administered by BLM. To give you a sense of the complexity of the situation, there is a prohibition of supplemental feeding on BLM grazing allotments combined with an inability to utilize mechanized snow removal operations.

In short, Administrator Ducheneaux, we are asking for any flexibility and innovative ideas from the FSA perspective that could expand eligibility and use of emergency programs to provide relief. Assistance with supplemental feed/water and locations to move livestock for grazing/feeding are needed urgently. Another priority is snow removal assistance and transportation expenses, including any options for offsetting fuel costs. We have asked our producers to submit claims to their local FSA offices and to document losses and conditions as precisely as possible.



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Any consideration you could provide to this unfortunate circumstance would be sincerely appreciated. The expertise that you and your staff have with the idiosyncrasies of your programs and budgeting authorities could prove to be very helpful. Please feel free to contact any of us at any time as we are committed to exploring every opportunity, as we know you are, to limit damage and manage resources during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

Craig Butters
Commissioner, Utah Department of Agriculture

Dr. J.J. Goicoechea
Director, Nevada Department of Agriculture

Kate Greenberg
Commissioner, Colorado Department of Agriculture

Doug Miyamoto
Director, Wyoming Department of Agriculture