



December 2019



Niobrara County FSA Office

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Lusk, WY 82225

Phone: 307-334-2953, Ext. 2
Fax: 855-415-3433

Office Hours

8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Monday - Friday

County Executive Director

Laura Kessler
laura.kessler@usda.gov

Program Technician

Kimberly Nusbaum
kimberly.nusbaum@usda.gov

Farm Loan Manager

Dixie Mount
307-322-4050
dixie.mount@usda.gov

County Committee

Jason ZumBrunnen, Chairman
Joe Kruse, Vice Chairman
Kurt Gaukel, Member
Carol Geisinger, Minority Advisor

Next County Committee Meeting:
January 16, 2020

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

OFFICE CLOSED:

December 25, 2019 - Christmas Day
January 1, 2020 - New Year's Day
January 20, 2020 - President's Day

30 Days - Contact the office to report adverse weather conditions & livestock losses within 30 days of realizing the loss

15 Days - File notice of loss on NAP covered crops 15 days after realizing loss

NIOBRARA COUNTY NOTES

Greetings Niobrara County Farmers and Ranchers!

Congratulations to Jason ZumBrunnen, who was re-elected to represent farmers and ranchers from LAA 3, the southeast portion of Niobrara County, on the county committee. Jason is embarking on his third term on the Niobrara County FSA Committee. We appreciate all the voters that took time to cast their votes in this election. The county committee system works solely because of your participation.

It appears to be shaping up to be a long, and potentially eventful, winter. With that in mind, we want to remind producers of the various programs available for adverse weather. There are many different situations, caused by unfavorable weather conditions that FSA has programs available to help with. Some of these situations include, but aren't limited to: losing livestock, feeding additional feed above normal or losing grazing days due to severe weather events – we have the ability to potentially help with many of these situations, whether they directly affect the livestock, the pasture, or feed. Just a few examples would be: livestock that perished in a blizzard as they were buried alive, lightning strike kills livestock or ignites your haystack, a flood washes your haystacks away or kills livestock, feeding more feed more than normal due to harsh winter conditions, having to transport water in a drought year, transportation costs associated with severe storms, requiring additional equipment or trucking requirements.

When anything remotely disastrous occurs that affects your livestock, pasture, or feed, caused by the weather, please remember to call the office within 30 days of noticing a problem on your operation, as we may be able to assist you.

- Niobrara County FSA Staff

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Sign-Up Underway - Workshop to be held January 15, 2020

The Niobrara County FSA office is currently accepting new offers to participate in CRP under a general sign up that started December 9, 2019 and ends February 28, 2020. Continuous CRP offers will be accepted all year long. Producers interested in removing sensitive land from agricultural production and planting grasses or trees to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality and restore wildlife habitat are encouraged to enroll. General CRP sign-up is a competitive process. The Niobrara County FSA staff will be host two CRP workshops on January 15, 2020 – one at 1:00 p.m. and a second at 5:30 p.m. at the Niobrara County FSA office.

Farmers and ranchers who enroll in CRP receive a yearly rental payment for voluntarily establishing long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as "covers") to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat on marginally productive agricultural lands.

Continuous CRP sign-up initiatives target specific resource concerns. Financial assistance is offered for many practices including conservation buffers, pollinator habitat plantings, wetland buffers and prairie strips to name a few. If the practice is considered needed and feasible, the contract will be accepted. Enrolling land in Continuous CRP is not a competitive process.

2020 WEDNESDAY WORKSHOPS

The Niobrara County FSA office will be conducting a series of Wednesday Workshops on every third Wednesday of each month at the Niobrara County FSA office at 1:00 p.m. Each month a different topic will be discussed. These workshops are going to be run with a small basic overview of each topic and then focus on the questions that are brought up at the workshop. These sessions are intended to provide a relaxed environment for producers to gain knowledge about programs whether you are a beginning farmer/rancher or an experienced producer just wanting to learn more about a specific topic. The 2020 schedule is below, however topics may be adjusted based on need if new programs develop. Please feel free to contact the office at 307-334-2953 if you have any immediate questions about any of these programs.

January 15 - Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) We will be discussing General CRP as well as Continuous CRP. General CRP is where producers offer parcels of land to remain in grass cover in order to help against water and wind erosion as well as offer wildlife habitat. The Continuous CRP program that allows you to enroll acreage into the CRP program at any time of the year for specific resource concerns. This would include practices like but not limited to field buffers, shelter belts or buffers against water bodies. **There will be two sessions on this day - one at 10:00 am and another at 5:30 pm.**

February 19 - Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) This program compensates producers for livestock losses due to adverse weather events such as blizzards, lightning strike, flood etc.

March 18 - Conservation Reserve Program - Grasslands (CRPG) This program is designed for producers to receive an annual rental payment on ground that is currently in grasslands to keep these acres in grasslands while being able to retain the ability to utilize them for haying and grazing during the 15-year contract period. Potential cost share available for fencing (internal) and water development.

April 15 - Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL) This program provides low interest loans for grain bins, hay sheds and associated items in building these commodity storage facilities. Also available are loans on commodity handling equipment such as but not limited to flatbed trailers, grain trucks, augers, bale accumulators, hay wagons, hay spears and attachments.

May 20 - Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm Raised Fish Program (ELAP) - This program is designed to provide assistance for losses incurred due to natural disasters but are not covered under any other programs. Examples would be additional costs to transport water/feed, loss of grazing, loss of feed due to the adverse condition, colony collapse disorder and many others.

June 17 - Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL) This program offers low interest nine-month loans on commodities such as wheat and oats in order to provide producers with more time to obtain additional marketing options.

July 15 - County Committee (COC) This session will provide information on different aspects of the County Committee such as duties, nominations, becoming a member and encourage participation from all underrepresented groups of producers.

August 19 - Farm Loan Options (Beginning Farmer/Youth/Operating) These programs offer low interest loans for the purchase of real estate and loans for term and annual operating needs.

September 16 - Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) This program provides insurance coverage on crops that are traditionally uninsurable with your crop insurance agent such as grass for grazing, hay, and vegetables just to name a few. NAP also offers buy-up options on yield base policies in order to insure for different levels of coverage.

October 21 - e-Gov This session will cover various items that producers can do on-line from home with Level 2 eAuthentication access. Such items would include checking payments, file for LDP's, electronically sign certain contracts in lieu of paper signature and FSA Farm+ (online GIS mapping of your farm).

November 18 - Farm Loan Partnerships. These programs offer low interest loans that are obtained in conjunction with other lenders. There are opportunities for split financing, joint financing, and guaranteed loans.

Special accommodations will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, individuals should contact the county FSA office staff directly or by phone.

GOV-DELIVERY – ELECTRONIC COUNTY OFFICE BULLETINS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announces that farmers and ranchers in Wyoming now can receive notifications thru email. To receive GovDelivery email notifications, subscribe online at www.fsa.usda.gov/subscribe or contact the Niobrara County FSA office for subscription assistance. Producers can establish subscriber preferences by choosing to receive federal farm program information by topic, by state or by county. Producers can select as many subscriber options as they want, which allows producers who farm in multiple counties or across state lines to receive updates from each county in which they operate or have an interest.

FSA SIGNATURE POLICY

Husbands and wives may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and CCC programs in which either has an interest. This option is automatically available unless a written request for exclusion is made to the county office staff by either spouse. There are exceptions to the rule, where spouses may not sign on behalf of each other for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities. Individual signatures are also required on certain Farm Loan and Farm Storage Facility Loan documents.

APPEAL PROCESS

After an FSA official makes a decision on a request for USDA services or application, the producer will be sent a letter informing him/her of the decision and options that can be pursued. Generally, program participants have three choices – an informal review with the original agency decision-maker, an opportunity for mediation and finally an appeal to the next level of authority within the agency.

FOREIGN BUYERS NOTIFICATION

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. The Farm Service Agency administers this program for USDA.

All individuals who are not U.S. citizens, and have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA with 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form (FSA-153) could result in civil penalties of up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the property. County government offices, Realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements.

FARM and OPERATION CHANGES

FSA needs to keep records updated at all times. If you have had any of the following changes, please report them to our office so we can update our records accordingly:

- Individual or business names, phone numbers, or addresses
- Shares or membership changes to entities
- Deeding land into a trust
- Sold or purchased property
- Added or dropped leased land

BANK ACCOUNT CHANGES

Current policy mandates that FSA payments be electronically transferred into a bank account. In order for timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA county office when an account has been changed or if another financial institution purchases the bank where payments are sent. Payments can be delayed if the FSA office is not aware of updates to bank accounts and routing numbers.

POWER OF ATTORNEY

For those who find it difficult to visit the county office because of work schedules, distance, health, etc., FSA has a power of attorney form available that allows producers to designate another person to conduct business at the office. If interested, contact our office or any Farm Service Agency office for more information.

CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE

Any person convicted under federal or state law of a controlled substance violation could be ineligible for USDA payments or benefits. Violations include planting, harvesting or growing a prohibited plant. Prohibited plants include marijuana, opium, poppies and other drug producing plants.

BREAKING NEW GROUND

Landowners and operators are reminded that in order to receive payments from USDA, compliance with Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions are required. Farmers with HEL determined soils are reminded of tillage, crop residue, and rotation requirements as specified per their conservation plan. Producers are to notify the USDA Farm Service Agency prior to conducting land clearing or drainage projects to insure compliance. Failure to obtain advance approval for any of these situations can result in the loss of eligibility and all Federal payments.

NIOBRARA COUNTY FSA OFFICE
PO BOX 720
LUSK, WY 82225-0720

In accordance with Federal civil rights laws and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, *--or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the form call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Office of the Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights

1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.

Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

fax to (202) 690-7442

e-mail at program.intake@usda.gov.

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