**Niobrara County Notes**

Greetings Niobrara County Farmers and Ranchers!

If you’ve had NAP coverage in the past and would like to continue your coverage for 2022, or if you would like to obtain coverage for the first time, the deadline to purchase coverage for the 2022 crop year is December 1, 2021. Please remember that if you are a socially disadvantaged producer, such as a female, or a minority due to race, or if you are a beginning farmer or rancher, NAP coverage fees are waived for such producers.

Niobrara County and many surrounding counties are now eligible for assistance under the Livestock Forage Program (LFP), due to persistent drought conditions. If you’ve sustained grazing losses due to drought, please contact the office for more information on what is eligible and how to apply. If you have a NAP policy on pasture or a yield-based crop that has sustained a loss, please be sure to contact the office to file a notice of loss on those acres.

USDA has announced recent additions to the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) that will assist producers who have incurred higher feed transportation costs in 2021. Please contact the Niobrara County FSA Office for more information on what is eligible and how to apply.

We’ve also been informed that there will be changes to our water hauling program, that will make Niobrara County eligible for water hauling assistance for 2021. Please let the office know if you’ve been hauling water in pastures that you don’t normally have to haul water to, so that we can further assist you.

We’ve begun the signup process for 2022 ARC/PLC contracts, so please stop by and visit with us to get your 2022 contracts enrolled on your base acres.

Please be aware that as we enter the holiday season, staff availability may be limited due to scheduled leave, so please be sure to call the office to set up an appointment for anything you might need! Thank you!

- Niobrara County FSA Staff

**Please note the following important dates and deadlines:**

November 25, 2021 – OFFICE CLOSED – Thanksgiving Day Holiday

December 1, 2021 – NAP purchase deadline for 2022 crops

January 31, 2022 – Deadline to file LFP, ELAP, LIP application for payment
Within 15 days of noticing crop loss – File NAP Notice of Loss
Within 30 days of noticing livestock, pasture, or feed loss – File LIP/ELAP Notice of Loss

Niobrara County Producers Urged to Consider NAP Risk Protection Coverage Before Crop Sales Deadlines

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages you to review available USDA crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage, before the crop deadline of December 1, 2021.

Federal crop insurance covers crop losses from natural adversities such as drought, hail and excessive moisture. NAP covers losses from natural disasters on crops for which no permanent federal crop insurance program is available.

The following crops in Niobrara County have a NAP application deadline of December 1:

- Fall Seeded Crops
- Perennial Crops, such as grass

You can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by visiting the RMA website.

NAP offers higher levels of coverage, from 50 to 65 percent of expected production in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers of organics and crops marketed directly to consumers also may exercise the “buy-up” option to obtain NAP coverage of 100 percent of the average market price at the coverage levels of between 50 and 65 percent of expected production. NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production.

For all coverage levels, the NAP service fee is the lesser of $325 per crop or $825 per producer per county, not to exceed a total of $1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties.

Beginning, underserved, veterans and limited resource farmers are now eligible for free catastrophic level coverage.

Federal crop insurance coverage is sold and delivered solely through private insurance agents. Agent lists are available at all USDA Service Centers or at USDA’s online Agent Locator. You can use the USDA Cost Estimator to predict insurance premium costs.

For more information on NAP, service fees, sales deadlines, contact your Niobrara County USDA Service Center at 307-334-2953, Ext. 2 or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Qualified veteran farmers or ranchers are eligible for a service fee waiver and premium reduction, if the NAP applicant meets certain eligibility criteria.

Apply for Livestock Forage Losses

Producers in Niobrara County are eligible to apply for 2021 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on native and improved pasture.

LFP provides compensation if you suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land or fire on federally managed land.

County committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is received by the National Office of qualifying drought or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing normal permitted livestock on federally
managed lands due to qualifying fire. You must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later than January 31, 2022, for 2021 losses.

For additional information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, contact your Niobrara County USDA Service Center at 307-334-2953, Ext. 2 or visit fsa.usda.gov.

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**USDA Offers Online Tool for Drought-Stricken Ranchers to Estimate Compensation for Feed Transportation Costs**

An online tool is now available to help ranchers document and estimate payments to cover feed transportation costs caused by drought, which are now covered by the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) updated the program this year to include feed transportation costs as well as lowered the threshold for when assistance for water hauling expenses is available. USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) will begin taking applications this fall.

The new ELAP Feed Transportation Producer Tool is a Microsoft Excel workbook that enables ranchers to input information specific to their operation to determine an estimated payment. Final payments may vary depending on eligibility.

To use the tool, ranchers will need:

- Number of truckloads for this year.
- Mileage per truckload this year.
- Share of feed cost this year (if splitting loads).
- Number of truckloads you normally haul.
- Normal mileage per truckload.
- Share of normal feed cost

The tool requires Microsoft Excel, and a tutorial video is available.

**Updates to ELAP**

ELAP provides financial assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events or loss conditions as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. ELAP now covers feed transportation costs where grazing and hay resources have been depleted. This includes places where:

Drought intensity is D2 for eight consecutive weeks as indicated by the U.S. Drought Monitor; or

Drought intensity is D3 or greater.

The tool calculates the estimated payment for feed transportation assistance, but it is not an application. Once FSA begins accepting applications later this fall for feed transportation assistance, ranchers should contact their FSA county office to apply. To simplify the application process, ranchers can print or email payment estimates generated by this tool for submission to FSA. The deadline to apply for ELAP, including feed transportation costs, for 2021 is Jan. 31, 2022.

ELAP already covers above normal costs for hauling water to livestock in areas where drought intensity is D3 or greater on the drought monitor. FSA is also updating ELAP to also cover water hauling in areas experiencing D2 for eight consecutive weeks, lowering the threshold for this assistance to be available. Program benefits are retroactive for 2021.
Payment Calculations

USDA will reimburse eligible ranchers 60% of feed transportation costs above what would have been incurred in a normal year. Producers qualifying as underserved (socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning or military veteran) will be reimbursed for 90% of the feed transportation cost above what would have been incurred in a normal year.

USDA uses a national cost formula to determine reimbursement costs that will not include the first 25 miles and distances exceeding 1,000 transportation miles. The calculation will also exclude the normal cost to transport hay or feed if the producer normally purchases some feed. For 2021, the initial cost formula of $6.60 per mile will be used (before the percentage is applied).

Eligibility

To be eligible for ELAP assistance, livestock must be intended for grazing and producers must have incurred feed transportation costs on or after Jan. 1, 2021. Although producers will self-certify losses and expenses to FSA, producers are encouraged to maintain good records and retain receipts and related documentation in the event these documents are requested for review by the local FSA County Committee.

For more information, please contact the Niobrara County FSA Office at 307-334-2953, Ext. 2.

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Elections for the 2021 County Committee

Voting is now open for the USDA’s Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) Niobrara County Committee.

It is important that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the USDA. The 2021 election in Niobrara County will be conducted for the representative for Local Administrative Area (LAA) #2, the northern part of Niobrara County.

County committee members are a critical component of FSA operations. Committees should be comprised of members who reflect the diversity of producers involved in production agriculture in Niobrara County. This means that producers representing underserved groups or communities should be on the committee to speak on behalf of their constituency.

Underserved producers are beginning, women and other minority farmers and ranchers and landowners and/or operators who have limited resources. Other minority groups including Native American and Alaska Natives; persons under the poverty level, and persons that have disabilities are also considered underserved.

County committee election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters beginning Nov. 1, 2021. The last day to return completed ballots to the Niobrara County USDA Service Center is Dec. 6, 2021.

For more information on eligibility to serve on FSA county committees, visit:/fsa.usda.gov/elections.

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Applying for FSA Direct Loans

FSA offers direct farm ownership and direct farm operating loans to producers who want to establish, maintain, or strengthen their farm or ranch. Direct loans are processed, approved and serviced by FSA loan officers.

Direct farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock and feed, farm equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance, and other costs including family living expenses. Operating loans can also be used to finance minor improvements or repairs to buildings and to refinance some farm-related debts, excluding real estate.

Direct farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, enlarge an existing farm, construct and repair buildings, and to make farm improvements.
The maximum loan amount for direct farm ownership loans is $600,000 and the maximum loan amount for direct operating loans is $400,000 and a down payment is not required. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Please contact the Platte County FSA office at 307-322-4050 for more information or to apply for a direct farm ownership or operating loan.