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Commissioner

North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Equine Partners Hay Transportation Relief Program

A Special Project of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

Description of Program

Background

North Carolina equine owners are currently experiencing a shortage of hay to feed to their animals as a result of the ongoing drought, a late freeze, and above average temperatures. Without assistance in coping with the hay shortage, there is a serious risk that North Carolina could experience a serious decline in the ownership of equine including the abandonment of animals to be cared for by animal rescue organizations and the public sector. Equine owners who cannot locate and transport suitable, affordable hay may be forced to sell their animals or resort to actions deemed inhumane by the general public. Unlike with cattle, a slaughter market for equine does not exist that would afford an owner an ultimate way to sell unwanted equine. This raises the specter of the loss of farmland and a way of life that has attracted many to our state.

Although some equine owners may elect to take advantage of a program operated by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services that is designed to help livestock farmers cope with this year's weather conditions by providing in state transportation assistance for baled corn stover and soybean hay, many may deem these products unsuitable for equine. In addition, the availability of corn stover and soybean hay is rapidly coming to an end.

It is the opinion of equine experts that North Carolina has very limited supplies of hay traditionally fed to equine. The only remaining option is to bring hay in from states such as New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, the Dakotas, and Canada. The major constraints in such an effort are the logistical and economic burdens of transporting hay from those areas of the country where it is available into North Carolina. Transportation costs make moving hay in from out of state a severe economic burden to a majority of equine owners.

Overview of the Equine Partners Hay Transportation Relief Program

NCDA&CS has explored several options to assist equine owners in locating and transporting hay to their farms and stables. It is clear that the biggest impediment North Carolina equine owners have to moving hay to their farms and stables is the cost of transportation. In discussing this limitation with the leadership of the North Carolina Horse Council and other horse industry representatives, it has become apparent that private funding can be obtained to offer some monetary support to help equine owners defray transportation expenses.

The goal of the Program is to collect and fairly distribute funds that may be used to defray some of the cost associated with transportation of hay **from out of state** at a rate of 50 cents per mile round trip or \$1.00 per loaded mile. In the event that an equine owner secures transportation at a cost of less than \$1.00 per loaded mile, the equine owner may receive reimbursement of up to 50% of his or her actual costs and in either case no more than \$300. Reimbursements will be made on a first come, first serve basis until funds are exhausted. The availability of funds is entirely dependent on the level of donations received from outside sources.

How the Program will Work

Eligibility

- It is understood that the term “equine owners” includes individual equine owners, commercial equine operations, stabling operations, and animal rescue organizations.
- Equine Partners Hay Transportation Relief Program funds are only available to reimburse equine owners for hay brought in from outside North Carolina on or after September 5, 2007.
- To be eligible to receive reimbursement for transportation costs, a buyer of hay must submit an Equine Partners Hay Transportation Relief Transportation Reimbursement Request form, along with the original bill of lading from the trucker used to transport the hay. Equine owners should retain a copy of the bill of lading or transportation receipt for their records.
- Because funds are limited, the costs of only one (1) load per farm or stable will be eligible for reimbursement, with a \$300.00 cap on the reimbursement.
- Any cases of fraud or abuse of the program will be prosecuted or pursued to the fullest extent of criminal and civil law.
- Only full loads of at least 25 large round or square bales weighing at least 750 pounds, or the equivalent weight in small square bales (approximately 18,750 lbs), will qualify for the reimbursement. Horse owners who cannot utilize a full load of hay are encouraged to coordinate their shipments with other horse owners.
- Animal owners can utilize their own transportation (use their own truck, tractor trailer, etc.), but may be asked to submit additional documentation prior to reimbursement.
- Hay transported must be for feed to be given to equine. Hay that is purchased for re-sale will not be eligible for the transportation reimbursement.

- Animal rescue organizations and entities that coordinate shared loads will be permitted to break full loads into multiple deliveries to several horse owners without penalty. The entity or entities seeking reimbursement must have the original receipt(s).
- Hauls must be a minimum of 100 miles one way to be considered. Reimbursement will be based on \$0.50 per mile round trip or \$1.00 per loaded mile.
- The buyer of the hay is responsible for making the arrangements of the purchase, transportation, and assuring payment to both the hay owner and the trucker.
- The Reimbursement Request form must include the following information:
 - ⇒ Name of equine owner or stable seeking reimbursement
 - ⇒ Mailing address and telephone number
 - ⇒ NC Farm ID Premises Identification Number for each equine owner where hay is ultimately delivered (for shared loads, multiple identification numbers must be provided)
 - ⇒ Size of equine operation, including specifically the number of equine and hay on hand prior to the purchase for which cost share funds are sought
 - ⇒ Seller information, including the identity, address, and telephone number of the individual who sold the applicant the hay
 - ⇒ Transportation information, including the name and number of any individual or entity who provided transportation services
 - ⇒ The original bill of lading or transportation receipt
 - ⇒ Date of delivery
 - ⇒ Number of miles the hay was transported
 - ⇒ Number of bales transported including a description of the bales (small or large bales)
 - ⇒ Delivery location and location of origination of load (which must be outside NC)
 - ⇒ Signature and date of application

Applying for Equine Partners Hay Transportation Relief Funds

Because the relief funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis, equine owners must request to be placed on the waiting list for funds.

There are two ways to get on the waiting list to receive Equine Partners funds:

1. Fill out the Equine Partners Web form
- or
2. Call the Hay Alert hotline at 1-866-506-6222

Either of these steps will put you on the waiting list for funds, regardless of whether you placed an ad on the Hay Alert Web site or made your own arrangements to bring in hay from outside North Carolina.

The time of your request will be documented, and you will have reserved your place in line. Once you have done that, someone from the NCDA&CS will contact you to verify your eligibility. If funds are available, a Reimbursement Request form will be sent to you.

Determining the Amount of Cost Share Funds to be Allocated

When private funds have been depleted, the program will end.

The Department reserves the right to deny or limit the reimbursement if an applicant's transportation expenses appear to be unreasonably excessive, and to request additional information or documentation before making eligibility determinations. This is not an entitlement program. The ultimate discretion for eligibility determinations belongs to the Department, and determinations are final once they are rendered.

The Department reserves the right to amend or further clarify the procedures and guidelines of the Equine Partners Hay Transportation Relief Program in order to ensure fair and timely management of the program.

Making a Contribution

If you are aware of any individual or entity that would consider donating funds to be used in the Equine Partners Hay Transportation Relief Program, please contact the Department's toll-free Hay Alert Hotline at 1-866-506-6222 or via e-mail at christina.lucas@ncmail.net. A "donor information sheet" is available for entities or individuals considering making a contribution. Contributions to the Equine Partners Hay Transportation Relief Program are tax deductible.

Additional Information

Individuals who want to know more about the Equine Partners Hay Transportation Relief Program are encouraged to visit the Department's Hay Alert website at www.ncagr.com/hayalert or to call the Department's toll-free Hay Alert Hotline at 1-866-506-6222. Individuals may also contact the North Carolina Horse Council for more information at www.nchorsecouncil.com or by calling 919-854-1990.