



**Steve Troxler**  
Commissioner

## North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

### **Ag Partners Hay Relief Program**

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

#### **Description of Program**

##### **Background**

North Carolina cattle farmers are currently experiencing a shortage of hay and forage products to feed to their cattle as a result of dry weather, a late freeze, and above average temperatures. According to the North Carolina Cattlemen's Association, as many as one-third of the state's livestock farmers are at risk of discontinuing their operations as a result of this year's adverse weather conditions. Without assistance in coping with the hay shortage, there is a serious risk that North Carolina could experience an exodus of livestock operations. Producers who cannot locate and transport hay, forage, stover, or fodder may be forced to sell their herds. This raises the specter of the loss of farmland, a local food supply source, and a way of life that has attracted many to our state.

The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has been actively working on efforts to help livestock farmers cope with this year's weather conditions. The Department is asking corn and soybean farmers in the eastern part of the state who have been hurt by the drought to bale their corn and beans for hay, as opposed to plowing them into the ground. In some instances, farmers can harvest their corn crop *and* bale corn stover that is left behind the combine. The Department has hosted several demonstrations at Research Stations around the state to educate farmers about the use of alternative forages, and has made a great deal of information about this practice available on its website. These demonstrations and the Department's website also feature advice and guidance on baling, storing, and feeding these forages from the North Carolina's Cooperative Extension Service.

Notwithstanding the efficacy of using alternative crops for forage, many farmers might prefer to bring hay or forage products in from out of state. The major constraints in such an effort are the logistical and economic burdens of transporting hay from areas of the country where it is available into North Carolina. Transportation costs make moving hay in from out of state nearly an economic impossibility.

## Overview of the Ag Partners Hay Relief Program

NCDA&CS has explored several options to assist farmers in locating and transporting forage products to their farms. It is clear that the biggest impediment North Carolina farmers have to moving hay and other forage products to their farms is the cost of transportation. In discussing this limitation with private entities who serve the agricultural industry, it has become increasingly apparent that those entities are willing to offer some monetary support to help farmers defray transportation expenses.

The Department now has access to 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/mile. These reimbursements will be made on a first come, first serve basis until funds are exhausted. The extent of funds is entirely dependent on the level of donations received from outside sources.

## How the Program will Work

### Eligibility

- Ag Partners Hay Relief Program funds are only available to reimburse farmers for hay brought in from outside North Carolina on or after September 5, 2007. Another program has been established to help farmers offset the costs of moving hay and forage products within the state.
- To be eligible to receive reimbursement for transportation costs, a buyer of hay or forage must submit an Ag Partners Hay Relief Transportation Reimbursement Request form, along with the original bill of lading from the trucker used to transport the hay or forage. Farmers 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 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 (25 or more large round or square bales weighing at least 750 pounds or more per bale, or the equivalent amount in smaller bales) will qualify for the reimbursement.
- 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.
- Forage or hay transported must be for feed to be given to livestock raised for food and fiber, including cows, goats, and sheep.
- 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 or forage is responsible for making the arrangements of the purchase, transportation, and assuring payment to both the grower and the trucker.
- The Reimbursement Request form must include the following information:
  - ⇒ Name of farmer seeking reimbursement
  - ⇒ Mailing address and telephone number
  - ⇒ NC Farm ID Premises Identification Number
  - ⇒ Size of livestock operation, including specifically the number of cattle 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 forage
  - ⇒ 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 forage was transported
  - ⇒ Number of bales transported
  - ⇒ Delivery location and location of origination of load (which must be outside NC)
  - ⇒ Signature and date of application

#### Applying for Ag Partners Hay Relief Funds

Because the funds are available on a first come, first serve basis, only those producers who have communicated directly with Steven Lathrop of NCDA&CS are eligible to receive relief funds. In other words, farmers must verbally verify their eligibility and the availability of funds prior to submitting an application. Funds are available on a first come, first serve basis. If a farmer wants to be placed on the waiting list to receive Ag Partner Hay Relief Program funds, he or she must place an ad seeking hay or forage on the Department's Hay Alert website at [www.ncagr.com/hayalert](http://www.ncagr.com/hayalert) or by calling the Hay Alert Hotline at 1-866-506-6222.

If a farmer has made his or her own arrangements to bring in hay or forage from outside North Carolina without using the website or hotline, he or she may still be eligible for the Ag Partners Hay Relief Program funds. However, because funds are available on a first come, first serve basis, that farmer must contact the hotline or visit the website to document his or her request to be placed in the queue to request Program funds. Specifically, a farmer who simply wants to "get in line" to receive Program funds can do so by calling the hotline or by placing a request for Program funds in the "Transportation Section" of the Hay Alert website. The time of that request will be documented, and the farmer will have reserved his or her place in line. There is no guarantee that all farmers will be reached.

#### Determining the Amount of Cost Share Funds to be Allocated

When private funds have been depleted, the program will end. As of September 10, 2007, over \$11,000 had been pledged from private sources for the Ag Partners Hay Relief Program.

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 Ag Partners Hay 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 Ag Partners Hay Relief Program, please contact Chrissy Lucas at the Department by dialing 919-733-7125 or via e-mail at [christina.lucas@ncmail.net](mailto:christina.lucas@ncmail.net). Contributions to the Ag Partners Hay Relief Program are tax deductible.

### **Additional Information**

Individuals who want to know more about the Ag Partners Hay Relief Program are encouraged to visit the Department's Hay Alert website at [www.ncagr.com/hayalert](http://www.ncagr.com/hayalert) or to call the Department's toll-free Hay Alert Hotline at 1-866-506-6222.