

**Natural Resources Conservation Service
Report To
Papio-Missouri River NRD Board
May 14, 2020
Andy Bohnenkamp, District Conservationist**

Good afternoon Board members and General Manager Winkler! I hope this report finds you all well.

FIELD OFFICE STATUS

Thus far NRCS has made no plans to change posture on Field Office operations as we move through the COVID-19 Pandemic situation. We continue to keep our doors locked to the public and only have 1 NRCS employee in the office each day. We sincerely appreciate the continued presence of all NRD Field Office staff in the offices throughout the NRD. Without their continued support we would really have a difficult time keeping up with our customers and all the field work that needs to be completed this spring. So a big THANK YOU to all the NRD Field Representatives and District Program Assistants! Telework for NRCS staff appears to be working better than expected however all our employees are ready to get back to normal and get back to the office.

PROGRAMS

Emergency Animal Mortality Management

NRCS is providing emergency assistance to livestock producers who may have the unfortunate need to de-populate livestock. Producers can sign-up for the emergency program by working with the local NRCS field office staff and inquiring about the Livestock Mortality practice through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). I have attached a Livestock Mortality Fact Sheet for your information. So far we have zero applications for this program in the Papio NRD however we have just recently begun to inform our potential customers.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

We currently have over 100 CRP contracts pending approval in the NRD since the sign-up period closed. NRCS staff with the help of Rob Gray, our Pheasants Forever Biologist, are working through field visits and planning on these 100 contracts which will ultimately provide wildlife habitat, soil erosion control and improved water quality on over 600 acres of ag land within the NRD.

EQIP & CStP

NRCS staff are busy working through the Resource Assessment and Ranking process on these two programs. The CStP sign-up deadline has been extended until May 29th of 2020. Progress is slow due to new software, computer applications and the Covid-19 operational procedures but we will meet our deadline for contract obligations in July I am 100% confident.

Unfortunately I have no NRCS news to report on staffing or NRCS positions within the NRD at this time, except to say we tried to hire an individual for the Soil Conservationist in Tekamah however it fell through and we are waiting on that position to get re-advertised.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Compliance Reviews

Its that time of year when our NRCS staff head into the crop fields and do compliance checks on random farms in the District. We have 110 compliance reviews to complete this crop year and it's a great opportunity for our staff to discuss opportunities for conservation on farmland with farmers in the NRD.

Respectfully Submitted

Andy Bohnenkamp
P-MRNRD District Conservationist

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Emergency Livestock Mortality

Funding available to help with safe disposal of livestock



Assistance Available

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering financial and technical assistance to livestock producers for animal mortality disposal, resulting from impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

How to Apply

Producers facing livestock depopulation are encouraged to file the attached Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) application (Form CCC-1200) with their local [NRCS field office](#). Applications are being accepted now.

Through EQIP, a producer can apply to receive assistance through a practice called Emergency Animal Mortality Management. This practice provides technical and financial assistance to properly dispose of livestock.

The producer is responsible for the proper disposal of animal mortality by following requirements specific to each option. All Federal, State and Local laws must be followed and are the responsibility of the producer to secure any necessary permits.

Eligibility

Agricultural producers, owners of non-industrial private forestland, and Tribes are eligible to apply for EQIP.

For eligibility requirements, an EQIP application and approved early start waiver must be filed with the local NRCS office. Applicants are not eligible for practice payment if the mortality management practice is implemented prior to signing an EQIP 1200 application form and receiving an early start waiver approval notification letter.

Other program information:

- To receive assistance, producers must have **both** an EQIP application and an approved early start waiver filed at the local NRCS office prior to disposal of animal carcasses.
- Financial assistance is limited. Not all applications will be funded.
- Payment cap is \$25,000 per eligible applicant.
- Historically Underserved (HU) producers, including socially disadvantaged, beginning and limited resource farmers, Indian tribes and beginning farmers/veterans are eligible for an increased payment rate.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Through EQIP, NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to plan and implement conservation practices that improve soil, water, plant, animal, air and energy usage on agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland.

While not designed to be an emergency response program, EQIP can play a vital role in assisting producers recovering from disasters.

For more information contact your local USDA Service Center, or Nebraska EQIP Program Manager Conor Ward, (402) 437-4112 conor.ward@usda.gov.

