

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 4, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue III
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We believe the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency's Livestock Indemnity Program should implement common sense changes to the information collected from farmers prior to providing reimbursement for animals that have died as a result of adverse weather events.

The Humane Farming Association informed us that, from 2013 to 2017, USDA's LIP issued payments of approximately \$199 million to farmers and ranchers for animal deaths due primarily to adverse weather events. The total animal deaths included a staggering 277,471 livestock and 6,686,168 poultry. Despite the large amount of taxpayer dollars and animal loss involved, the LIP does not currently ask farmers applying for reimbursement to answer any questions regarding the shelter, care, or treatment provided to animals that died due to adverse weather events. Furthermore, since the cap was removed in the *Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018*, there is now no limit on the amount of LIP compensation that a qualifying farmer can receive.

Moreover, the Humane Farming Association informed us that many animals are provided little to no shelter and subjected to prolonged suffering and agonizing deaths that could be preventable if proper weather precautions and disaster management plans were encouraged by the FSA's LIP. For example, in the summer of 2017 in California's central valley, thousands of dairy cows died from heat stroke due to a lack of adequate protections from the heat such as sufficient shade, fans, and misters. In the aftermath, three counties in California declared states of emergency, because they were not able to render the dead fast enough.

When no adequate protection is put in place during adverse weather events, producers are reimbursed for dead livestock at 75 percent of the animals' market value. We believe this represents a clear disincentive for farmers to take the necessary steps to have a disaster management plan and provide their animals with protections from adverse weather events. Without this compensation, we believe many producers would no doubt make an effort to provide for their animals. Instead, we believe massive numbers of neglected livestock are dying painfully and needlessly while taxpayers foot the bill.

For these reasons, we believe that producers applying for compensation under LIP be required to provide detailed information regarding the precautionary measures that the producer took to avoid the death of livestock during adverse weather events. We believe LIP applicants should be required to provide direct proof, including but not limited to photos, videos, or records, of preparations made to provide for the well-being of animals in their care during adverse weather events. In addition to the Livestock Death Loss Documentation required by LIP, which requires applicants to document the number and kind of livestock that died, we believe the FSA should require that applicants answer specific questions regarding the preparations that were made to protect animals from death from adverse weather events. These questions could include:


- What was the producer's disaster management plan in the case of an adverse weather event?
- What steps were taken by the producer to keep animals from suffering from or dying as a result of exposure to heat, cold, or other elements?
- What type of shelter did the producer provide to animals prior to the eligible adverse weather event?
- What percentage of a producer's animals did that shelter accommodate?
- Were transport vehicles available to evacuate the animals out of harm's way?
- Were emergency food/water supplies available to accommodate animals that did not have access to normal food/water sources?
- Was veterinary assistance available to treat or humanely euthanize animals?


We believe all farm animals deserve to be given an adequate level of humane treatment and care including proper food, water, and shelter. Furthermore, we believe farmers should not be rewarded with taxpayer dollars for not providing these most basic levels of humane treatment. For these reasons, we respectfully request that, if LIP compensation is made available, the FSA should only provide it to those producers who not only put in place adverse weather protections for their livestock, but also document those protections.

Thank you for your attention to our request and we look forward to your response.


Sincerely,

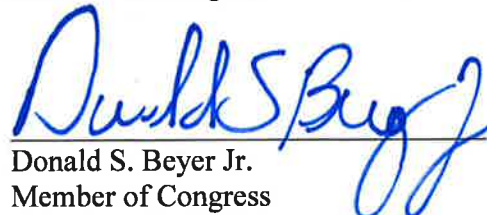

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