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Western Triangle Agricultural Research Center Entomologists Dr. Gadi Reddy and Dr. Govinda Shrestha update producers on Entomology research at the Knees Field Day. Photo by Brent Roeder, MSU Extension Teton County.

Assistance for qualifying livestock, honeybee and farm-raised fish program losses

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will issue \$34 million to help agricultural producers recover from 2017 natural disasters through the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP), which covers losses not covered by certain other USDA disaster assistance programs. These payments are being made available today, and they are part of a broader USDA effort to help producers recover from hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, wildfires and drought. A large portion of this assistance will be made available in federally designated disaster areas.

“From Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, through the South, the Southwest, California and the Great Plains, American agriculture was devastated by natural disasters in 2017,” said Bill Northey, Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation. “The Trump Administration is moving quickly to distribute financial assistance to help producers recover and rebuild. It is important to get this help to producers in time for the spring planting season.”

ELAP aims to help eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events or loss conditions, including blizzards and wildfires, as determined by the Secretary. ELAP assistance is provided for losses not covered by other disaster assistance programs such as the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) and the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP).

The increased amount of assistance through ELAP was made possible by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, signed earlier this year. The Act amended the 2014 Farm Bill to enable USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to provide assistance to producers without an annual funding cap and immediately for 2017. It also enables FSA to pay ELAP applications as they are filed for 2018 and subsequent program years.

Other USDA Disaster Assistance Programs

The Act removed program year payment limitations and increased the acreage cap for the Tree Assistance Program (TAP), a nationwide program that provides owners of orchards, vineyards and nurseries with cost share assistance to replant eligible trees, bushes, and vines following a natural disaster. For example, the program will help owners of citrus groves in Florida, avocado trees in California, coffee plantations in

Puerto Rico and vineyards reduce the cost of replanting, and speed recovery from the loss of fruit and nut trees, bushes, and vines.

Prior to the Act, there was a combined program year payment limitation of \$125,000 for ELAP, LIP and LFP per person or legal entity. The Tree Assistance Program (TAP) had its own \$125,000 payment limitation. The Act removed the program year per person and legal entity payment limitation for LIP and TAP. As a result of the Act, a \$125,000 per person and legal entity single payment limitation applies to the total amount of program year payments received under both ELAP and the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) and program payments under LIP and TAP no longer have payment limits.

Under the updated program, as amended by the Act, growers are eligible to be partly reimbursed for losses on up to 1,000 acres per program year, double the previous acreage limit of 500 acres.

In total, it is estimated that the Act will enable USDA to provide more than \$3 billion in disaster assistance, including the \$2.36 billion announced last week to be made available through FSA's new 2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program. This includes \$400 million made available for the Emergency Conservation Program, which helps farmers and ranchers repair damage to farmlands caused by natural disasters. As signups across the country are completed, additional applications will be funded.

According to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the United States was impacted by 16 separate billion-dollar disaster events in 2017 including: three tropical cyclones, eight severe storms, two inland floods, a crop freeze, drought and wildfire. More than 25 million people – almost eight percent of the population – were affected by major disasters. From severe flooding in Puerto Rico and Texas to mudslides and wildfires in California, major natural disasters caused catastrophic damages, with an economic impact totaling more than \$300 billion.

For Assistance

Producers with operations impacted by natural disasters and diseases in 2018 are encouraged to contact their local USDA service center to apply for assistance through ELAP, TAP, LIP and LFP. Producers with 2017 ELAP claims need to take no action as FSA will begin paying those claims today.

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Western Triangle Agricultural Research Center agronomist, John Miller, updates producers on spring wheat and barley varieties at the Knees Field Day. Photo by Brent Roeder, MSU Extension Teton County.

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Four keys to maximize backyard egg production

By Hudson Hill,

UW Extension educator serving southwest Wyoming

Everywhere I go in Wyoming, I see more and more chickens. It seems more people than ever are experiencing the joys of having chickens and farm-fresh eggs. Here are four key concepts to consider when producing backyard eggs.

1. Nutrition is critical

Free-ranging chickens acquire most of the essential nutrients they need; however, as a guideline, provide growing chickens at least an 18 percent protein until maturity (between 16 and 18 weeks with most layers) then 16 percent protein once they start laying.

Calcium might even be as critical for layers, as a hen produces 150 percent of her body weight in eggs over an 18-month laying period. Adequate calcium is a must to make all those egg shells. Calcium can be provided two ways. Most bagged layer feeds include 4 percent calcium.

Alternatively, you can provide a free-choice option such as oyster shells. Remember that calcium is critical once a hen starts to lay, but you do not want to provide that calcium in the diet before she starts to produce eggs.

2. Housing chickens is pretty simple

Keep chickens dry and out of the wind, give them a place to lay their eggs, and provide protection from predators. It's easy to get on the internet and find advice about heating chicken coops and keeping chickens warm enough to lay eggs. In general, if you have the right breeds and you're doing everything else right, chickens do not need additional heat.

3. To lay eggs, chickens need 14 hours of light

If you want your chickens to lay eggs in winter, you need to provide extra light. The best way is to install a light on a timer set to go off in the a.m., not the p.m. If the light turns off at night, the chickens are left in total darkness and do not roost as well. If the light turns off in the morning when the sun is up, the chickens go about their business. In December, for example, it gets dark by 5 p.m. and light by about 8 a.m., which is nine hours. Adding a light with a timer set to come on about 3 a.m. and turn off about 8 a.m. provides the flock with a full 14 hours of light.

4. Culling, the hardest management concept

Backyard producers must decide which comes first, the chicken or the eggs. After the first year, hens become less productive. After several years, they may be laying few eggs or none at all. Culling is removing those hens that are no longer laying eggs.

A hen lays eggs for about 18 months. After that, physiology will try to force her through a molting period. During molting, a hen stops laying and loses her feathers. In nature, this usually happens when daylight hours shorten. She will start laying again in the spring.

Here are two strategies I see poultry owners use for culling laying hens.

Producers purchase chickens, keep them through one full cycle, then cull the entire flock and start again with new birds. This approach closely mimics mainstream egg production and is probably the most economical way to produce eggs.

Other producers keep chickens of different ages and breeds and decide on an individual basis how long the chickens stay. These producers let the chickens go through the molting process. When egg production drops too low for the number of chickens, the producer examines the vent and pin bones to determine which chickens are laying eggs, then decides which and how many to cull.

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Dr. Phil Bruckner (MSU Winter Wheat Breeder) updates producers on winter wheat varieties at the Knees Field Day. Photo by Brent Roeder, MSU Extension Teton County.

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Ed Davis (MSU Agronomist) shows producers a test plot of CoAxium winter wheat which is tolerant to a non-selective group 1 graminicide, Agressor. Agressor can be sprayed on the winter wheat without harm. At the same time, grass weeds like feral rye, jointed goat grass and downy brome can be controlled in the crop. Photo by Brent Roeder, MSU Extension Teton County.



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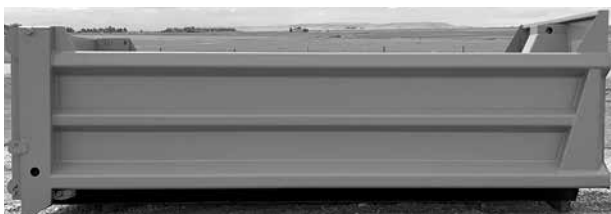
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