

Nevada County Disaster Livestock Access Program

OVERVIEW: The Agricultural Departments of Nevada, Placer, and Yuba Counties along with UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE); in cooperation with the CalFire, Sheriff's Office, and Office of Emergency Service of all three counties, have created a multi-jurisdictional Disaster Livestock Access Program to facilitate for the care of commercial livestock before, during, and after a wildfire or other natural disaster event.

CHALLENGE: Due to the scale of operations and the fact that many ranches operate on a variety of leased and owned land that may or may not be contiguous, evacuating livestock from commercial ranching operations may not be possible in the event of a major incident. Sheltering-in-place may be the best and safest alternative. Safe access by trained and qualified ranch personnel is critical to livestock welfare, firefighter safety, law enforcement safety, and public safety.

SOLUTION: Livestock Access Pass cards are applied for by and distributed to ranchers before a disaster. The application process is designed to confirm that the cardholder is a bona fide agricultural owner-operator or employee whose services are essential to providing protection and care for livestock. Individuals who acquire the Livestock Access Pass should be key personnel who have a working knowledge of the agricultural property, including access to irrigation systems, ranch equipment, and other essential infrastructure. They are aware of or have been trained in emergency procedures and understand that their role is to support the agricultural operation, not to fight fire or act as first responders during disaster. The cards do not necessarily mean the cardholder will be able to pass through road closures to get to their farm or ranch. If there is imminent danger, front-line emergency personnel are empowered to use discretion when it comes to protecting emergency crews and the public from unnecessary exposure to risk. However, in those cases when the boundaries of the closure area include agricultural land not deemed at imminent risk, the card should allow cardholder access to agricultural property.

INNOVATION: This program is innovative in creating a proactive solution to the increasing risk and prevalence of disaster events necessitating evacuations in our rural counties. Further, it represents a tri-county partnership.

RESULTS: While the program has not yet been tested (program was not fully established during the River Fire), the success of this program could not have happened without the cooperation and participation of CalFire, Sheriff's Office, and OES. Over the past 3 months, 3 different trainings were offered in Nevada, Placer and Yuba Counties. These trainings have been attended by 45 individuals. Agricultural Dept. in all three counties will continue to evaluate the program and look to extend this program to other types of commercial agricultural production, as appropriate.

REPLICABILITY: This program could be replicated by single counties or in partnership with other counties.

PROGRAM OR PROJECT CONTACT:

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