



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE
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COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE – September 12, 2005

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All Mississippi Counties Eligible for Farm Assistance

All 82 counties in Mississippi have been designated as eligible for the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) various disaster assistance programs. Lester Spell, Mississippi's Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce, said the declaration was made late last Friday afternoon. Spell said the repair and rebuilding of livestock fencing, tree debris removal, and disposal of dead birds on poultry farms has been underway on many farms. However, farmers in all Mississippi counties can now be eligible to recover some of those costs they have incurred as a result of the hurricane damage.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will provide cost sharing for the repair and building of new fencing for food producing livestock farmers as well as for storm debris removal such as downed trees.

In addition USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is granting \$1,250.00 per poultry house for disposal of birds where there are losses of poultry houses and the need to bury birds. NRCS has a list of criteria for proper disposal of the dead birds that must be complied with by the poultry farmers.

A visit to the farm by FSA or NRCS representatives for damage assessments is not required before repairs to fencing, tree debris removal, and the burial of dead poultry is done by the farmer. However, Spell urges farmers to be diligent in documenting storm damage expenses and keeping receipts on supplies, labor, fuel and other items needed. Also, farmers should contact their local FSA and NRCS offices as soon as possible to begin qualifying for reimbursements and applying for low interest loans.

The state's Soil Conservation Service (SCS) offices will give funding priorities to disposal of dead birds on poultry farms. Farmers should contact their local SCS office for available assistance.

This declaration by the USDA also makes qualified farm operators eligible for emergency loans provided eligibility requirements are met. Farmers have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for emergency loans to help cover part of their losses. Farm Service Agency (FSA) has a variety of programs available, in addition to the emergency loan program, to help eligible farmers recover from adversity.