

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
BOARD AGENDA LETTER**



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Agenda Number:
Prepared on: 9/25/02
Department Name: Ag. Commr (& Fire/OES)
Department No.: 051
Agenda Date: 10/01/02
Placement: Administrative
Estimate Time: 5 min.
Continued Item: NO
If Yes, date from:

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: William Gillette, Agriculture Commissioner
John Scherrei, Fire Chief

STAFF CONTACT: William Gillette, Agriculture Commissioner (681-5600)
Bruce Carter, OES Manager (681-5526)

SUBJECT: Ratify Request for USDA Secretarial Drought Declaration
and Livestock Assistance Program

Recommendation(s):

That the Board of Supervisors:

Ratify the request for United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretarial Drought Declaration regarding ranchers impacted by the drought emergency and that USDA Livestock Assistance Programs be made available to eligible Santa Barbara County ranchers.

Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:

The recommendation(s) are primarily aligned with Goal No. 1. *An Efficient Government Able to Respond Effectively to the Needs of the Community*; and, Goal No. 4, *A Community that is Economically Vital and Sustainable*.

Executive Summary and Discussion:

Critical Timeline On September 19, 2002 the USDA announced a new federal funding program for assistance with livestock producers. The new "Livestock Compensation Program" was made available to counties that suffered losses exceeding 50% to forage due to drought conditions and who submitted their request to the Governor's Office of Emergency Services also on September 19, 2002. (Please see Attachment 1). Santa Barbara County was one of sixteen counties statewide to be submitted on behalf of the State for consideration. (Please see Attachment 2). The State also required the attached supporting documentation to be submitted by September 26, 2002. (Please see Attachment 3) Because of critical timing needs, these actions had to be completed quickly. Consequently, staff was unable to meet the timelines for the Sept 24,

2002 Board meeting. We are therefore requesting that your Board ratify the above-mentioned actions taken by staff.

Impact to Livestock Ranchers: The livestock industry is entirely dependent on sufficient rainfall for forage production on the county's grazing land. This sector of the agricultural industry is experiencing hardship due to the recent drought conditions. Losses are occurring to ranchers both from reduction of herd size, which jeopardizes future earnings, and the substantial increase in supplemental feed costs. Rainfall averaged below normal since January 2002. The following is based on rainfall data provided by the Santa Barbara County Flood Control:

2002 RAINFALL

MONTH	HISTORICAL AVERAGE	ACTUAL RAINFALL	% DIFFERENCE
January	2.61	.78	-70%
February	2.98	.16	-94%
March	2.81	.59	-79%
April	.91	.23	-75%
May	.26	.17	-35%
June	.04	0	-100%

Average of four stations: Cuyama, Orcutt, Sisquoc, Santa Ynez

County ranchers have been severely impacted by drought since January 2002. An estimated 30 farms have suffered forage losses of 95% in the Cuyama Valley and an estimated 300 farms in the rest of the County have suffered forage losses of 80%.

This forage loss has significantly impacted carrying capacity resulting in early and lighter weight cattle and other livestock sales and significantly reduced herd size and increased costs for supplemental feed.

A Farm Services Agency Emergency Board Meeting was held July 2, 2002 to discuss the current status of grazing lands and the United States Department of Agriculture Livestock Assistance Program. Several agencies are involved in the federal disaster assistance process. They include the United States Department of Agriculture Farms Services Agency, California Department of Food and Agriculture, County Office of Emergency Services, U.C. Cooperative Extension and Agriculture Commissioners for Santa Barbara and Sal Luis Obispo Counties, and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

Supporting the Livestock Assistance Program request and forwarding the Emergency Declaration to the Governor's Office of Emergency Services was a necessary administrative step to initiate eligibility for

federal assistance programs. There is no guarantee that the USDA will support an assistance program or that individual ranchers will qualify for assistance.

Mandates and Service Levels:

None

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

There will be no fiscal impact to Santa Barbara County. The actual assistance program is funded and administered by the local USDA Farm Services Agency.

Special Instructions:

None

Concurrence:

County Counsel
County Administrator

- Attachments:**
- (1) Letter from M. Brown, CAO to D. Jones, Governor's OES (9/19/02)
 - (2) Letter from D. Jones, Governor's OES to USDA Sec. Veneman (9/19/02)
 - (3) Letter from B. Gillette, Ag. Comr. to D. Jones,, Governor's OES (9/23/02)