

LIVESTOCK PROGRAMS

Ranchers endured the worst side effects of the extension of the 2008 Farm Bill and its subsequent lapse. Continued drought and the October 2013 blizzard hurt many ranchers, and as a result, livestock programs, particularly those that provide disaster assistance, feature prominently in the 2014 Farm Bill. Two other issues of high interest to NFU – Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) and rules related to the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) – were also addressed.

Efforts to undermine or repeal COOL were defeated and the 2014 Farm Bill leaves the COOL law intact.

COOL was even expanded to apply to goat meat and farm-raised venison, and the labeling of production steps – born, raised, and slaughtered/harvested – will continue to be required on all COOL-covered commodities. However, the bill requires USDA to study the economic impact of COOL within six months of enactment. Additionally, the 2014 Farm Bill does not impede USDA's authority to enforce the Packers and Stockyards Act and crack down on abusive market practices by consolidated packers and processors.



The 2014 Farm Bill includes four **Supplemental Agricultural Disaster Assistance Programs**, two of which comprise the bulk of the spending and are directed toward livestock. For the first time, these livestock programs are endowed with mandatory funding. The programs are also retroactive, so that USDA will be able to provide aid to farmers and ranchers for losses incurred in 2012 and 2013.

Livestock Indemnity Payments (LIP) will pay up to 75 percent of the market value for livestock mortality in excess of normal rates. Losses due to attacks by other animals or adverse weather conditions are also eligible for payments. The **Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP)** compensates ranchers for grazing losses due to drought or fire on land owned, leased, or purchased by a qualifying rancher, or land that was sold due to drought or was used by a contract grower on in a county affected by drought. Payments under LFP may equal up to 60 percent of the monthly feed costs incurred by the producer or the feed costs calculated by the normal grazing capacity of the land and payments can rise up to the 80 percent level for ranchers or growers forced to sell livestock because of drought.

Special arrangements and exceptions are further described in the bill. For example, assistance is excluded for grazing losses on land used for haying or grazing under a Conservation Reserve Program contract. The farm bill includes specific language on county designations according to the National Drought Monitor service and also has alternative requirements for livestock grazed on public lands.

Further animal health-related provisions include renewal of the trichinae certification program, establishment of an animal health laboratory network, and additional supervision of the avian influenza surveillance program in the National Poultry Improvement Plan. Also included are a competitive production and marketing grant program through the National Sheep Industry Improvement Center and prioritization of feral swine eradication.