

COMMISSIONER TODD STAPLES
TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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COMMISSIONER STAPLES JOINS GOVERNOR PERRY TO ASSESS WILDFIRE DAMAGE AND HELP REBUILD LIVES OF FELLOW TEXANS

Commissioner Staples establishes “STAR Fund” to help replace lost fences, restore operations destroyed after a disaster

AUSTIN — As firefighters struggle to contain some of the worst wildfires in Texas history, Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples is calling on Texans to lend a helping hand by making a donation to the State of Texas Agriculture Relief Fund, or STAR Fund. The fund was created to collect monetary contributions from private individuals and entities to assist farmers and ranchers in responding to and recovering from an emergency. The STAR Fund may be used to rebuild fences, restore operations and pay for other agricultural relief efforts.

“These raging wildfires are catastrophic in nature, destroying homes, killing livestock and devastating the livelihoods of farmers and ranchers who dedicate their lives to supplying us with food, clothing and other essential daily needs,” Commissioner Staples said. “As these fires sweep through rural Texas, fences are dismantled and cattle and other livestock are left to roam. Through the STAR Fund, we can help our fellow Texans reestablish their lives, rebuild fences and restore basic operations that will ultimately assist in keeping the public safe.”

As a longtime provider of supplies to Texas farmers and ranchers, McCoy’s Building Supply generously answered Commissioner Staples’ call by donating the first \$20,000 to help fellow Texans recover from the destructive wildfires.

“We have a deep connection to West Texas – as ranch owners, and as we serve the farm and ranch community at McCoy’s Building Supply,” said Brian McCoy, president and CEO of McCoy’s Building Supply. “The devastation of these fires is tremendous, but in the true spirit of Texas, we will recover together. We’re grateful to be a small part of the large work that is to be done.”

In addition to the STAR Fund, emergency Livestock Supply Points have been established to help ranchers secure hay for livestock. Interested ranchers may contact their County Emergency Operations Center or AgriLife Extension County Office for more information.

Today, Commissioner Staples took an aerial and ground tour of the areas devastated by the Swenson Fire. The blaze has torched more than 100,000 acres in Stonewall, King and Knox counties. He also joined Gov. Rick Perry in Merkel to visit with officials at the Texas Forest Service Incident Command Post. Commissioner Staples honored firefighters for their valiant duty in protecting Texans. Despite the heavy damage of the last few weeks, reports to date indicate no lives have been lost.

“We are Texans, and when disaster strikes, our citizens rise to meet the challenge,” Commissioner Staples said. “I ask all Texans who have the means to assist their neighbors in need to please come forward and show their support.”

To help those who have suffered losses, you can make a monetary donation to the STAR Fund, by visiting www.TexasAgriculture.gov and clicking on STAR Fund under Most Popular Links.

More About Recent Fires

High winds and hot temperatures have fueled 183 fires across the state in the past seven days, displacing more than 100 Texas families and scorching more than 400,000 acres. Since January, nearly 1 million acres have burned across the Lone Star State, according to the Texas Forest Service.

Hay Hotline and Emergency Hay Assistance

The Texas Department of Agriculture is also encouraging impacted ranchers to utilize the Hay Hotline to locate forage and hay supplies. The listings include individuals and businesses that have hay for sale or pasture for lease. The Hay Hotline may also be used to donate hay. To access the Hay Hotline, call 1-877-429-1998, or go to www.TexasAgriculture.gov and look under Most Popular Links.

For emergency hay needs, ranchers in the affected areas are encouraged to contact their respective County Emergency Operations Center or AgriLife Extension County Office. The following Livestock Supply Points have been created to distribute hay on an emergency basis:

- **Stonewall County Livestock Supply Point**

Location: Stonewall County Fair Grounds, Hwy 380, Aspermont, TX

POC: Jason Miller, County Extension Agent

Office: (940) 989-3510; cell: (806) 445-5056

Email: jbmiller@ag.tamu.edu

- **Jeff Davis County Livestock Supply Point**

Location: Red Barn Ranch, 1 mile South of Ft. Davis

POC: Logan Boswell, County Extension Agent

Office: (432) 837-6207; cell: (432) 249-0265

Email: lboswell@tamu.edu

Federal Assistance

Federal assistance is also available. Farmers and ranchers may contact their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office to inquire about the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) for assistance with lost fences, and the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) for livestock losses. Producers are encouraged to find out more about eligibility for these federal programs prior to removing damaged fences and livestock carcasses.

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