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Board Authorizes Livestock Pass Program for Local Emergencies

Allows Owners to Care for Commercial Livestock during Natural Disasters

Stockton, CA – At its meeting on Tuesday, July 9, 2024, the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors authorized the County’s Agricultural Commissioner to establish a Livestock Pass Program in San Joaquin County. The Livestock Pass Program will train and authorize local farmers and ranchers to access and care for commercial livestock during natural disasters or wildfire emergencies. The program was brought to the Board by the Ag Commissioner to help alleviate loss of property due to evacuations during wildfires and other emergencies.

“During the recent Corral Fire, we saw how ranchers and livestock owners were impacted during the evacuation orders,” commented Supervisor Robert Rickman, whose Fifth Supervisorial District includes the areas impacted by the recent wildfire. “I appreciate the Ag Commissioner responding to our ag communities needs and seeking to protect their livestock while also ensuring safe and secure access to properties within the County. The Livestock Pass Program will allow trained commercial ranchers and their staff to operate within evacuated areas and protect their livestock and their livelihoods.”

In those cases when the boundaries of the closure area include agricultural land not deemed at imminent risk, the Livestock Pass card can allow the card holder access to the agricultural property. The program will be up and running by the end of August. The Ag Commissioner’s office is in the process of designing the program now with County Counsel, the Sheriff’s Office, and Office of Emergency Services. The process for sign up will be promoted in late August and disseminated through the Farm Bureau, UC Cooperative Extension, the Ag Commissioner’s lists, and public outreach.

“It is critical that pass holders understand that their role is to support the agricultural operation, not to fight fire or act as first responders during disaster,” added Kamal Bagri, San Joaquin County Agricultural Commissioner. “This program is about protecting livestock and local ranchers’ products even in emergency situations. The Livestock Pass does not guarantee access through road closures. Ultimately, emergency personnel will use discretion when it comes to protecting emergency crews and the public from unnecessary exposure to risk.”

The Livestock Pass will be available to the commercial livestock producers before a disaster. The application process will be designed to confirm that the cardholder is an agricultural owner-operator or managerial employee whose services are essential to providing protection and care for livestock. Key personnel can be issued a pass including those who have a working knowledge of agricultural property, including access to essential infrastructure. Livestock Pass program participants are required by law to complete a 4-hour training program based on the training provided by CalFire to its equipment contractors. Continuing education or re-certification is required each year.