

# Office of the Governor

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Governor Announces Help for Farmers Affected by Drought**

Governor Christie Whitman today announced a reimbursement program for livestock producers who lost their winter feed supplies as a result of this year's devastating drought.

"This year's drought made it impossible for many of our dairy, beef, and equine producers to produce a normal hay crop. Our best estimate is that these farmers will need as much as 3,000 tons of hay to feed their animals through the winter," Gov. Whitman said. "To help these farmers make it through the coming months, today I am announcing a program to reimburse them for some of the cost of buying and transporting hay for their animals."

The program's purpose is to help cover the purchase of hay and/or the transportation of donated hay into New Jersey. Under the program, farmers trying to compensate for this year's hay crop shortfall would be eligible for reimbursement of \$35/ton for donated hay brought in from outside New Jersey; \$50/ton for hay purchased outside New Jersey; or \$60/ton for hay purchased from a New Jersey supplier. The Governor stressed that farmers would be reimbursed only for hay purchased to feed livestock.

The state Department of Agriculture will administer the new program. In order to be eligible, farmers who apply for reimbursement from NJDA must have suffered a drought-related loss in forage production which would have been used to feed animals on the farm and the amount of hay purchased must be only the amount necessary to carry them through this season.

In addition, farmers will have to submit with their applications FSA assessments of loss or a loss assessment made by the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Service and production/utilization records for the past three seasons.

Governor Whitman applied for and received a USDA drought disaster designation for New Jersey in early August. She authorized NJDA to establish a farm drought information hotline to help farmers qualify for federal low-interest loans, determine hay and feed needs for the coming winter, and alert farmers to other state and federal assistance programs as they became available. At the same time, she authorized free testing for nitrates in field corn and mycotoxins in stored grains to insure that these crops were safe to feed livestock.

Governor Whitman also signed emergency regulations authorizing state purchase of farmland development easements on farms hard hit by the drought. Administered by the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), these regulations enable the SADC to prioritize drought-driven farmland preservation

applications in order to ease cash flow problems resulting from crop losses related to this summer's hot, dry weather.

Under her direction, NJDA has also distributed a hay directory listing nationwide sources of free and purchased hay, straw, grain and corn ([www.state.nj.us/agriculture/haysources.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/haysources.htm)).

