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State Boosts Funding for Hay Storage Cost Share Program
Better Forage Means Better Cattle says Ag Commissioner

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Tennessee farmers looking to improve hay quality and to better manage forage resources will have ample opportunity with a major boost in state dollars for the popular Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program (TAEP).

“With the passage of Governor Bredesen’s budget and a \$21 million increase in funding for the Ag Enhancement program, the Tennessee General Assembly recognized that the investments we’re making in Tennessee farms are working,” said state Agriculture Commissioner Ken Givens. “The increase in funding will help us greatly expand our services to meet the demand for programs like hay storage cost share.”

Beginning July 2, cattle and hay producers can apply for 35 percent cost share assistance, up to \$3,500, toward the construction of a new hay storage structure, or additions to existing structures. Building sites must be well-drained and meet minimum specifications as recommended by the University of Tennessee Extension.

“Applications must include a project budget with cost quotes, so anyone who expects to apply should go ahead and get an estimate in hand and be ready to mail in their application no earlier than July 2,” said Givens.

To be eligible, farmers must be a Tennessee resident and operate a farm or agribusiness located in the state with at least 10 head of cattle or 50 acres of hay production. Producers with livestock must also register their premises with the National Animal Identification System. Livestock premises can be registered at most Farm Service Agency, UT Extension, Farm Bureau or Co-op locations, or online at www.tennessee.gov/agriculture/tpis.

“The quality of hay production and storage has a direct impact on the quality and health of cattle, not to mention how it helps farmers prepare for and survive drought and other weather extremes,” said Givens. “If we can help farmers improve forage nutrition and handling, then we can make a real difference on their bottom line through better cattle management and marketability.”

The TAEP was established in 2005 by Governor Phil Bredesen and funded by the Tennessee General Assembly to help farmers improve cattle production and to encourage farm diversification and innovation. In addition to the hay storage program, farmers can also apply for cost share dollars to purchase genetically superior bulls and livestock handling equipment and to help produce or market a variety of specialty crops and products.

Only hay storage projects that are approved in advance by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture will be eligible for cost share assistance, and farmers will be limited to one application per fiscal year. Once approved, farmers will have until May 1, 2008 to complete approved activities and reimbursement requirements.

Applications for hay storage cost share are on the department's Web site and at most local farm service centers and farm suppliers. Only applications postmarked July 2 or after will be accepted, and farmers have until Oct. 1 to apply. For more information about the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program's hay storage initiative call (615) 837-5323, email Hay.Storage@state.tn.us or visit online at www.picktnproducts.org.

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