

The Extension Cord
“*Connecting K-State to the Community*”
by Mark Ploger
Pratt County Extension Agricultural Agent

Starbuck WildFire (The Kansas National Disaster)

Several Extension Agents, from South Central Kansas, witnessed first-hand the devastation caused by the Starbuck Wildfire across Clark and Comanche counties at the beginning of this week. What we saw and the people that we got to visit with really made your heart ache for what these area has now to face. The entire area looks like a desert, now, especially with our constant winds. It is truly the heartland’s version of a national disaster!

After visiting with several producers, it seems they all have the same thing in common...to reduce governmental red tape. We need to convince our legislators that the Starbuck fire is a disaster, just like a hurricane, etc. These people not only lost their homes; they lost their way of life! Their out buildings, tools of the trade, and machinery were lost. Several thousand head of livestock were killed and are still having to be put down due to fire-related injury. The thing that hit us the hardest were the ranchers telling us that they didn’t have enough ammunition to put down the animals that made it through the fire. Some of these cattle were so severely injured and in so much pain you couldn’t watch them have to suffer. The only thing they could do was to them out of their misery. This is something so difficult, especially after raising them from birth. You could see the the tears in those ranchers eyes as they shared this with us.

If someone from another state calls and asked what they can do, tell them call the legislators, because our people need help. We live in the BEST place on earth and we’ve seen it continually proven this week. This is a place no one thinks about and the national media needs enlightened. The financial loss these men and women are facing is alarming. Tell your Congress men and women they need to lift the disaster programs limits. These producers can't wait a year for payment, this disaster money needs to be streamlined, NOW. This is literally one of the worst disasters many of us have ever seen, and it's in production agriculture. Without assistance many of these producers are in jeopardy of financial failure. Many have loans at the bank and now have minimal, if any, cattle to pay them off. Common sense and flexibility are key here for recovery. Pray for rain, pray for producers at this stressful time, and God bless rural America. If you haven't shed a tear this week, come volunteer.

(Excerpts from: Aaron Sawyers, Comanche County Extension Agent)

Listed are some ways that yo can help with our neighbors relief efforts:

Kansas Farm Bureau's website www.kfb.org/firerelief.

Cash, donations of hay and fencing supplies, and volunteer hours are all part of the relief effort. KFB and the Kansas Livestock Association are cooperating to provide fire relief services.

Kansas Livestock Association at 785-273-5115. Checks can be mailed to the Kansas Livestock Foundation at 6031 SW 37th St., Topeka, Ks. 66614. "Fire Relief Fund" should be written in the memo line.

Or these local entities:

Ashland Community Foundation www.Ashlandcf.com

Send checks to;

Ashland Community Foundation/Wildfire Relief Fund

P.O. Box 276

Ashland, Ks. 67832

Please note Wildfire Relief Fund in memo line

Ashland Feed and Seed (Hay Donations)

Call Ashland Feed & Seed 620-635-2856

Specific Individuals and Families

If you know a specific family or individual impacted, make checks payable directly to the individual or family and mail to:

Stockgrowers State Bank

Wildfire Relief

P.O. Box 458

Ashland, Ks. 67831

Or

Bank of Ashland

Wildfire Relief

PO Box 157

Ashland, Ks. 67831

Thank you. As Kansans, we always rally to those in need. Thanks to the above organizations for their capacity to help us all do that.