

STATE OF NEBRASKA
Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)
March 21, 2019 1345

CONTACTS:

Taylor Gage, (402) 471-1970

Taylor.gage@nebraska.gov

Alyssa Sanders, (402) 405-6137

Alyssa.sanders@nebraska.gov

Mike Wight, (402) 471-7428

Corrected

National Guard Completes Successful Hay Drop in Colfax County

Lincoln, Neb. – A Nebraska Army National Guard helicopter crew delivered 10 round hay bales to cattle stranded by the recent devastating flood yesterday near Richland, in rural Colfax County.

The Nebraska Soldiers, who were part of mixed crew of multiple Army National Guard units, utilized a CH-47 Chinook helicopter assigned to the Grand Island-based Company B, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, to drop the hay bales to the cattle, which were stranded in multiple locations, often standing in several feet of water far from any other available access. The aerial hay drop took place on a fifth-generation family farm.

Wende Settles, a cattle producer with Wolfe Ranch, said it's hard to ask for help. But this time there were no other options.

“We’re used to helping other people, we’re not used to having to ask for it.” Settles said. “The [agricultural] community from one end of the state to the other end of the state has just been hit so hard... but we’re fortunate everybody got out safe...we just want to do what we can to help the animals... We calf all night long and check every two to three hours, and so not being able to get to them has just been really hard.”

Settles said her family appreciated all the assistance they have received. “[The] community has been wonderful. They’ve reached out, we’ve got cows at neighbors and other neighbors... Everybody has just been trying to help.”

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jeff Caniglia, Nebraska National Guard, said the mission was critical, considering that Nebraska’s farmers are the “lifeblood of Nebraska.” While speaking to Settles,

Caniglia said: “That’s why we’re here, to help... don’t hold back, if you need resources, if you need help, please ask.”

Those requesting assistance should go through their local emergency manager. An interactive list of all local emergency managers can be found under the “2019 Flood Dashboard” button on the NEMA website: <http://nema.nebraska.gov>.

For individuals wanting to provide resources to the agriculture community, call 1-800-831-0550.

For more photos and video of Operation Prairie Hay Drop, and for other imagery of the Nebraska National Guard’s involvement in the flood response, visit <https://www.dvidshub.net/feature/NebraskaFlood2019>.

(Additional Background): Prior to this mission, the most recent historically confirmed aerial hay bale drop the Nebraska National Guard executed was during the blizzard of 1949: Operation Snowbound. The most recent confirmed hay bale delivery was performed via 18-wheeler in the year of 1979, where the Nebraska National Guard hauled 500 tons of critically needed hay.