



Yakima Health District

Press Release

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Inslee responds to loss of dairy cows in Yakima County with emergency funding

YAKIMA, WA Dairy farmers who suffered an unprecedented loss of hundreds of cows during a blizzard on Feb. 9 are receiving help to properly dispose of the animals.

Gov. Jay Inslee made \$100,000 available to assist Yakima Valley farmers to collect and haul the animals to an Oregon landfill. As many as 1,800 dairy cows perished in the winter storm.

“The storm hit Washington state hard, particularly in the heart of our state's dairy industry,” Inslee said. “Through quick regulatory assistance and emergency funding, we are making every effort to help farmers with their response to this tragic event.”

Inslee called for a response team made up of personnel from state and local emergency management divisions; local health departments; the state departments of Agriculture, Ecology and Health; the South Yakima Conservation District; and the Washington State Dairy Federation.

Many of the deaths occurred in open areas and remote portions of the farms. Although weather conditions prohibited immediate response, removing the animals before temperatures increased was imperative to protect public health and the environment. A combination of response actions were chosen after careful evaluation of all options, which included regulatory requirements and field inspection of facilities.

Producers who could manage the deaths on their farms did so. The Department of Agriculture and the local conservation district will be providing technical assistance and oversight. Several farmers elected to contact rendering facilities, which have successfully collected many of the animals. Other farmers, especially those suffering the largest number of deaths, are electing to have a local solid waste company haul and dispose of the remains.

All response actions should be completed today.

“It is encouraging how quickly this team of farmers, regulators and the local community were able to assess the situation and reach solutions that met everyone’s needs,” Inslee continued. “Their rapid response and cooperative spirit help avert further impacts of this devastating situation.”

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