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## From Lisa's Desk

Hello Washakie and Hot Springs County Producers:

FSA is still holding office days at the Thermopolis NRCS office on the first Tuesday of the month from 9:00 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Give the Washakie-Hot Springs County office a call if you have questions or need assistance with an application. The phone number is 307-347-2456 ext. 2.

Best wishes,

Lisa Bower  
County Executive Director



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## Before You Break Out New Ground, Ensure Your Farm Meets Conservation Compliance

The term “sodbusting” is used to identify the conversion of land from native vegetation to commodity crop production after December 23, 1985. As part of the conservation provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, if you’re proposing to produce agricultural commodities (crops that require annual tillage including one pass planting operations and sugar cane) on land that has been determined highly erodible and that has no crop history prior to December 23, 1985, that land must be farmed in accordance with a conservation plan or system that ensures no substantial increase in soil erosion.



Eligibility for many USDA programs requires compliance with a conservation plan or system on highly erodible land (HEL) used for the production of agricultural commodities. This includes Farm Service Agency (FSA) loan, disaster assistance, safety net, price support, and conservation programs; Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation programs; and Risk Management Agency (RMA) Federal crop insurance.

Before you clear or prepare areas not presently under production for crops that require annual tillage, you are required to file Form AD-1026 “Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification,” with FSA indicating the area to be brought into production. The notification will be referred to NRCS to determine if the field is considered highly erodible land. If the field is considered HEL, you are required to implement a conservation plan or system that limits the erosion to the tolerable soil loss (T) for the predominant HEL soil on those fields.

In addition, prior to removing trees or conducting any other land manipulations that may affect wetlands, remember to update form AD-1026, to ensure you remain in compliance with the wetland conservation provisions.

Prior to purchasing or renting new cropland acres, it is recommended that you check with your local USDA Service Center to ensure your activities will be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions.

For additional information on highly erodible land conservation and wetland conservation compliance, contact [your local USDA Service Center](#).

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## Maintaining Good Credit History

Farm Service Agency (FSA) loans require applicants to have a satisfactory credit history. A credit report is requested for all FSA direct farm loan applicants. These reports are reviewed to verify outstanding debts, see if bills are paid timely and to determine the impact on cash flow.

Information on your credit report is strictly confidential and is used only as an aid in conducting FSA business.

Our farm loan staff will discuss options with you if you have an unfavorable credit report and will provide a copy of your report. If you dispute the accuracy of the information on the credit report, it is up to you to contact the issuing credit report company to resolve any errors or inaccuracies.

There are multiple ways to remedy an unfavorable credit score:

- Make sure to pay bills on time
  - Setting up automatic payments or automated reminders can be an effective way to remember payment due dates.
- Pay down existing debt
- Keep your credit card balances low
- Avoid suddenly opening or closing existing credit accounts

FSA's farm loan staff will guide you through the process, which may require you to reapply for a loan after improving or correcting your credit report.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, contact your Washakie-Hot Springs County USDA Service Center at 307-347-2456 ext. 2 or visit [fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov).



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## Conservation Practices Can Protect Livestock from Harmful Algal Blooms This Summer

Summer is the season for freshwater harmful algal blooms, which can produce toxins that are harmful to humans, livestock, working animals, and pets. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has several conservation practices that may help farmers and ranchers protect animals and people by restricting access to contaminated water or providing alternate water sources.



### The ABCs of HABs

Freshwater harmful algal blooms (HABs) are usually caused by rapid growth of blue-green algae (known as cyanobacteria) in water bodies such as lakes, ponds, and streams. These organisms can produce toxins (known as cyanotoxins) that are harmful to humans, livestock, working animals, and pets. Contacting or ingesting contaminated water (including water spray or mist) can result in irritation, illness, or even death.

Cyanobacteria are naturally found in water bodies, so they cannot be eradicated. Instead, it's important to understand how and why blooms occur. Cyanobacterial blooms and their potential toxicity often are a result of excess nutrients, such as phosphorus and nitrogen, in water bodies. Excess nutrients can come from

adjacent agricultural lands, livestock waste, and leaky septic systems, among other sources. HABs typically form in summer, when warm, nutrient-rich, stagnant waters and more frequent sunlight increase the opportunity for their growth.

Treatment of current HABs involves chemical, biological, or mechanical treatment targeted directly at the contaminated waters. Prevention of future HABs involves changing the conditions that favor cyanobacteria, including nutrient management of the surrounding land and trapping or treating nutrient losses to waterbodies.

### **Risks HABs pose to livestock, working animals, and pets**

Symptoms\* of cyanotoxin exposure in animals include:

- vomiting
- excessive salivation
- fatigue
- staggered walking
- difficulty breathing
- weakness
- convulsions
- liver failure

In severe cases, HAB poisoning can lead to death. Therefore, any potential intoxication needs to be immediately addressed by qualified professionals.

NRCS is not the authority on HAB symptoms in animals and humans. Please refer to the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) website](#) for further information on HAB symptoms or contact your state or county health department.

### **Steps you can take if a potential exposure to cyanotoxins has occurred:**

1. Eliminate animal access to the suspected contaminated water source.
2. Wash animals with clean water and monitor for symptoms of exposure to cyanotoxins. Isolate any animals exhibiting symptoms and seek veterinary care as soon as possible.
3. An alternative source of livestock drinking water might be needed.
4. Contact the appropriate state agency for sampling and testing guidance to test the water source for HABs and cyanotoxins. It is not safe for landowners to sample the water themselves without proper personal protective equipment and procedures.
5. If a HAB occurs, there is potential for recurrence. Therefore, the waterbody should be monitored.
6. Adopt conservation practices that reduce the risk of livestock exposure to HABs and prevent and reduce nutrient loading to waters to minimize the risk of future HABs occurrences.

### **Reduce livestock exposure to HABs**

If HABs or cyanotoxins have been detected in a water body, preventing exposure by restricting access is key to ensuring the health and well-being of people, livestock, working animals and pets on the farm.

NRCS has several conservation practices that may be useful to exclude livestock from contaminated waters or provide alternative water sources. Some examples are:

- Fencing
- Pond
- Access control

- Water well
- Watering facility

**For more information or assistance:**

To learn more about how NRCS can help address HAB concerns or other natural resource concerns, visit the [NRCS website](#) or contact NRCS at your [local USDA Service Center](#).



## Worland USDA Service Center

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FSA Fax: 855-415-3445

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