

# *South Carolina Department of Agriculture . . .*

**Hugh E. Weathers**

**Commissioner of Agriculture**

**Major General Stan Spears**  
**Adjutant General**

## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

**February 8, 2006**

**Who:**

SC Farmers and SC Guardsmen

**What:**

Operation Hayride, a New Gulf Mission, a mission of compassion to protect lives, human and animal, in our sister states of Mississippi and Louisiana. South Carolina National Guard to deliver over 3,000 large round and 2,500 square bales of hay from SC farmers to livestock producers on the Gulf Coast.

**When:**

First convoy of about twenty 40-foot National Guard battle-worn trucks just back from active duty in Iraq, will leave for Hattiesburg, Mississippi, at 11:15 a.m. on Thursday, February 9, 2006.

**Where:**

The convoy will depart from the SC National Guard Armory, 1 National Guard Road, adjacent to the State Farmers Market in Columbia, South Carolina.

**SC Guardsmen have a *New Gulf Mission – Operation Hayride - helping SC farmers send hay relief to the Gulf Coast***

COLUMBIA, SC - Knowing first-hand the plight livestock producers and the potential loss of their families' livelihood, South Carolina farmers have donated over 3,000 large round and 2,500 square bales of hay to the hurricane-ravaged Gulf Coast states. Thanks to the South Carolina National Guard, the hay will be transported to Mississippi and Louisiana livestock producers who are in dire need.

The first convoy of about twenty 40-foot trucks will leave South Carolina headed for Hattiesburg, Mississippi, from the South Carolina National Guard Armory in Columbia, SC at 11:15 a.m. on Thursday, February 9, 2006. Each battle-worn truck, which just came back from active duty in Iraq, will carry a full load of large round and square bales. It will take numerous trips to get all of the hay to its destination in the two states.

The SC National Guard and the SC Emergency Management Division are coordinating efforts with the SC Department of Agriculture for the hurricane-relief mission to the Gulf Coast. As the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) contact for South Carolina, the SC Emergency Management Division is coordinating requests from states needing hay with assistance from the South Carolina Guard.

Major General Stan Spears, Adjutant General of South Carolina, said, “This is a new mission to a different Gulf for our soldiers.” He added, “It’s a mission of compassion to protect lives, human and animal, in our sister states of the deep south of rural America.” The SC National Guard has been a vital arm of South Carolina’s military since 1670 in protecting lives and property during times of emergency.

Producers throughout the nation gave South Carolina farmers a helping hand with donations of hay during the droughts of the 80s and 90s. In return, South Carolinians have reached out with financial and in-kind donations to help those who have lost their homes and livelihoods in the hurricane-devastated Gulf Coast states.

Farmers in Mississippi and Louisiana have lost their equipment, fences, fields, animals, and virtually everything that it takes to stay in the business of farming. Also, they have either fed much of the hay they had stored for the winter or it was destroyed along with the barns that held it. Officials in those states have called for help and South Carolina farmers have risen to the cause.

“South Carolina is usually classified as a hay-deficit state and livestock producers generally need to import hay to supplement their supply,” said Hugh Weathers, Commissioner of Agriculture. “But, this has been a particularly good year for our hay producers and they want to share their bounty with their counterparts in need. I am deeply grateful to the South Carolina National Guard for helping them help their neighbors.”

For more information . . .

- about Operation Hayride, call Mary Ellen Tobias, marketing specialist and large animal emergency coordinator at the SC Department of Agriculture, 803-734-2349, [mtobias@scda.sc.gov](mailto:mtobias@scda.sc.gov).
- about the state’s emergency preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation activities, call Joe Farmer, [jrfarmer@emd.state.sc.us](mailto:jrfarmer@emd.state.sc.us), or John Legare, [jlegare@emd.state.sc.us](mailto:jlegare@emd.state.sc.us), 803- 737-8500.
- about the SC National Guard, call Lt. Col. Peter Brooks, 803-806-4200, [BrooksPJ@tag.scmd.state.sc.us](mailto:BrooksPJ@tag.scmd.state.sc.us).