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Drought Aid Package Short Approval

The U.S. Senate this week was unable to approve a disaster package with assistance for livestock producers hit by drought conditions during the past two years. A vote on an amendment by Sen. Kent Conrad (D-N.D.) received 57 votes toward passage, yet it was defeated on a procedural point of order regarding the budget which required 60 votes for approval.

The \$4.8 billion package would have covered weather-related losses in 2005 and 2006. Roughly half of the money would go to crop producers and an additional \$1.7 billion would compensate ranchers for livestock losses and higher feed costs.

In addition to the drought assistance, the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) supported inclusion of a retained ewe-lamb program in the disaster package.

Peter Orwick, ASI executive director stated, "While it is disappointing that the disaster package was not approved this year, the Senate vote indicates there is a good chance of passage in February when the 110th Congress convenes. We appreciate the work of the senators who offered the amendment with the assistance for sheep producers and look forward to working with them next year.

"Severe drought conditions have been wide spread over the past two years forcing producers to buy more feed or to transport their sheep to feed. Everyone is familiar with the increases in both feed costs as well as hauling costs this winter," concluded Orwick.

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