

OKLAHOMA CITY — The U.S. Department of Agriculture has designated eight Oklahoma counties natural disaster areas because of losses caused by drought and excessive heat that began May

1. The agency said Monday that Craig; Delaware; Mayes; Nowata; Ottawa; Rogers; Tulsa and Washington counties were placed Nov. 9 under the designation, which includes eight neighboring counties in Oklahoma and one in Arkansas. All qualified farm operators in the designated areas are eligible for low-interest emergency loans from the Farm Service Agency, and have eight months to apply for those loans to help cover part of their actual losses.

Farmers and ranchers in Adair; Cherokee; Creek; Okmulgee; Osage; Pawnee and Wagoner counties also can apply for help, as can those in Benton County in northwestern Arkansas.