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Contact:

Bill Hyman, Executive Director
Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas
Office: 512.620.0162 / Cell: 830.857.3500

ICA Key Player in “Operation New Fences”

Lockhart, Texas – April 28, 2009 – For Immediate Release –Last week was eventful for the Southeast Texas cattle industry. For over twenty years, Southeast Texas cattle producers have been building their local chapter of the Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas, and their efforts have paid off with big dividends. “Having an organized cattle industry group in the area was a huge help in the aftermath of the Hurricane Ike,” Bill Hyman, ICA executive director stated. Hyman was in contact with local ICA members throughout the storm and in the aftermath. This allowed ICA to know exactly what was needed and to become an integral part of the team of Texas Department of Agriculture, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Animal Health Commission, and the Governor's Emergency Management personnel, who were organizing relief efforts. In fact, ICA wrote the first check for \$10,000 to Texas AgriLife Extension Service which started the foundation for the collection of donations. Texas AgriLife officials used the money to immediately get supplies of feed, hay, and water troughs to Winnie for cattle and horses coming out of the surge area.

The culmination of those efforts was celebrated last week both at the local Southeast Texas ICA meeting and with “Operation New Fences”. Thursday, April 23, Southeast Texas ICA honored local volunteer firemen, key TDA and Extension personnel for their work during “Operation No Fences”.

The miles of devastation left by Hurricane Ike brought out the very best in people as volunteer firefighters manned their tanker trucks and kept fresh water available for cattle in the salt water surge area. It is estimated that these relief actions saved over 7,000 head

of livestock. At Thursday's meeting, State ICA President H. A. "Peanut" Gilfillian, and Southeast Texas ICA Director, Brian Abney, presented volunteer fire departments from Hankamer, Oak Island-Double Bayou, Nome, Hamshire, Winnie-Stowell, and Labelle-Fannett with checks totaling \$15,000 to cover their fuel costs and wear and tear on their equipment. These volunteer fire fighters used their tanker trucks to haul water to cattle for over two weeks after the storm while cattle were being gathered, sorted and hauled out of the surge area to fresh pastures.

On Saturday, March 25, Commissioner of Agriculture, Todd Staples, was in Winnie with a his staff, along with officials from Texas AgriLife and other state agencies to distribute donated fence building materials. This program "Operation New Fences" was kicked off at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Donations which were collected by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service were used to buy over \$100,000 worth of supplies for local ranchers to start replacing fences that were washed away in the storm surge.

Toni Spencer, ICA State Director and co-owner of M&J Fertilizer, made their newly renovated store available to TDA to use as the site for Saturday's festivities. M&J's main building and warehouses also sustained heavy damage from Hurricane Ike but are now repaired. San Antonio Steel and M&J provided fencing material at a reduced price so that TDA was able to give out vouchers to nearly 100 ranchers. Each rancher received 250 fence posts and ten rolls of Gaucho barbed wire, enough material to build about half a mile of fence. Later that day volunteers went to several local ranches and built fence. Although much work is left to be done Southeast Texas has begun rebuilding.

Southeast Texas ICA would like to thank Commissioner Staples and everyone who donated their time, supplies, and money for the relief effort. Commissioner Staples hit the nail on the head when he said, "the true spirit of Texas is shining brightly. It is a tribute to our grand state to see these donors and volunteers helping their fellow Texans overcome adversity and build a new future one fence post at a time."

The Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas represents land and cattle owners on

legislative and regulatory issues of importance to the cattle industry and agribusiness. For more information, contact ICA at 512.620.0162 or visit www.icatexas.com.

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