

# Livestock News



## Drought Cattle Management

- \* Supplement if you have low quality feed, such as on rangeland pasture with no summer growth. The cheapest supplement is often high-quality hay. Under some conditions (economic) it may be cheaper to feed more grain than hay. Be sure to make this conversion slowly to avoid digestive problems.
- \* Cattle will likely need supplemental Vitamin A, as drought-stressed forage is low in carotene. Additionally, don't try to save money by discontinuing veterinarian- recommended vaccination and parasite control programs.
- \* Avoid weed-infested hay, even if it's cheap. The future cost incurred by spreading weed seed and the reduced performance by feeding low-quality forage doesn't pay off.
- \* Take advantage of areas dominated by annuals – graze them early when their nutrient value is high and you can control future spread of the annual by minimizing or eliminating seed production as well as put gains on cattle.
- \* The last thing a cattleman wants is to ruin good pasture by combining severe overuse with drought stress AND lose his shorts selling calves because he waited until Halloween to get rid of them like everyone else.

<https://extension.wsu.edu/animalag/content/drought-cattle-management/>



## How Drought Affects Livestock

- Provide quality water sources.
- Ensure animals have a supply of cool, clean water.
- Truck water in for livestock.
- Monitor the water temperature and keep it cool.
- Monitor water sources, such as watering hole, streams, and ponds, which can dry out during drought conditions.
- Check water delivery systems periodically for proper function.
- Dry conditions can lead to undrinkable or toxic water sources. Have water quality testing performed.
  - o Concentration of naturally occurring salts and minerals can be harmful to animal health.
  - o Increased nutrients in water can lead to increased growth of blue-green algae, which can be toxic.

### Feed management.

- Avoid overgrazing or overstocking of pasture and rangeland. Forages should never be grazed “to the roots” under any circumstance.
- Drought situations can also result from increased grazing by livestock on toxic plants.
- Move animals to additional pastures. This may involve moving them out of the drought affected area.



### Monitor animals for illness.

- If your animals show signs of illness, contact your local veterinarian immediately!
- Signs of dehydration: rapid, shallow breathing; reluctance to move; weight loss; drying of mucous membranes (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth); decreased skin flexibility
- Signs of heat stress: increased respiration rate or panting; excessive salivation; elevation of the head to make it easier to breathe; open mouth breathing.

If you plan to feed drought damaged crops (e.g., feed forages) to livestock, be aware of these issues:

- Drought conditions can reduce the nutritional quality of forages and lower forage succulence (and protein content).
- Dry forages are harder to digest.
- Drought conditions increases plant toxicities (e.g., nitrates, mycotoxins).