



FACT SHEET

Management Tips for Beef Producers During Drought and Feed Shortages

The following are tips designed to provide producers with ideas in a year of feed shortages. It is focused toward simple management tips, not cropping options.

1. Monitor your cow and condition.

Think about one or combinations of the following options, if your cows look like they are going to be thin in the fall or if your pastures are not regrowing:

- Creep feed – commercial creep feeds are available or a creep feed can be balanced for you (*please refer to Making an Informed Decision on Creep Feeding Factsheet, available on the Perennia website*)
- Wean your calves early – this reduces the nutritional strain on your cows and allows them to use all their dietary intake for maintenance and their own growth
- Supplement pasture feed – either start feeding a green chop daily or feed a grain based supplement. Neither of these is cheap in this particular situation, but the alternative is higher feed costs in the winter

2. Remove your bull from the pasture after 60 days past calving.

This simple practice, coupled with pregnancy testing this fall, will allow you to make easy culling decisions. These are sensible practices in any year but are especially valuable in drought years.

- Any cows not bred are shipped. The drawback to this (particularly in years of drought) applies to late calving herds, or cows calving later than the middle of June
- With later calving cows, the spring flush of grass is over and rebreeding time could increase if adequate nutrition is not available

3. Test feed early.

- This allows you to be better prepared for winter feeding. By knowing the nutrient levels in your feeds you can plan your feeding program well in advance
- Feed your poorest quality feed first (providing your cows are in adequate condition coming off pasture) and save your best feed for just before calving and after calving
- You may also want to consider some processing of your poorer quality forage
- Grinding increases the intake of poorer quality feeds. Remember to always provide adequate supplements (protein, mineral and vitamins)

4. Consider selling your calves.

- If you have been overwintering your calves in the past, consider selling them this fall to lessen your reliance on stored winter feeds
- Know the local price for calves and be aggressive in identifying buyers
- Choose your replacement heifers early and try to choose the oldest (they should be the biggest). Then decide whether or not you will sell the remaining heifers as feeders
- Consider having your calves custom fed at a local feedlot

5. Investigate alternative feeds.

- Depending upon your location, cheap, nutritious feed may be available as a by-product
- These can include straw, apple pomace, cull potatoes, cull carrots, vegetable processing waste (beans, peas, cabbage, etc.), bakery waste, brewers grains and even cranberry and grape by-product
- These feeds can compensate for shortages of forage and may provide a cheaper alternative to grain supplementation. If you decide to feed any of these products contact a nutritionist for information regarding any special feeding consideration.

Hopefully, one or more of these ideas will be applicable to your situation. If you require any further information or have any ideas you would like to share, please feel free to contact the undersigned. In the meantime, pray for rain!

For more information contact:

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