

**Cattle operations dealing with low pond levels!**

The rain we received this week was welcomed by all but with amounts widely varying from ½” to 1 ½” most pond levels were unchanged. Low ponds are concerning for livestock operations for several reasons. Adequate water intake is necessary for all bodily functions but it also dictates proper forage consumption and milk production in lactating animals. Quality water is just as important as quality forage. Other concerns about low or stagnant ponds include concentrations of certain minerals, pathogens, bacteria and nitrates (usually not a problem unless heavily fertilized for many years). Freezing of shallow ponds may be an issue if the temperatures stay low for an extended period. There are many factors that influence water intake. This table will serve as a guide to estimate daily needs.

**Estimated Daily Water Intake of Cattle, Gallons/Day**

(adapted from a table prepared by Paul Q. Guyer, University of Nebraska)

Daily High Temp (F)	Cows Nursing Calves	Dry and Bred Cows	Bulls	Growing and Finishing Cattle			
				400 lb	600 lb	800 lb	1000 lb
	<b>Gallons/Day</b>						
35	11	6	7	4	5	6	8
50	13	7	9	5	6	7	9
65	16	8	11	6	7	9	11
80	18	11	13	7	9	10	14
95	20	15	20	11	15	17	19

Hopefully, each operation has access to at least one quality water source such as a deep pond, well, or stream. Herd consolidation and feeding hay at a good water source may be the only option to get by until adequate rainfall refills the ponds.

Ponds fill in over time; take advantage of the low water levels to clean them out. This will increase the holding capacity and help them last longer through the next drought. Cattle paths and overflows cut into dams, lowering the holding capacity. There is no better time to repair these than now. Be ready to capture the rains when they come.

Another alternative to improve water quality, prevent erosion and preserve pond structure is to install a gravity fed water tank that is pipe fed from the pond. Remember not all ponds and terrains are suitable for this setup.

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