



DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION

University of Arkansas System

Beef & Forages Newsletter



DECEMBER 2017



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Hope to see you at
the Four States
Cattle Conference
and Agricultural
Exposition.

If you have any
questions regarding
winter management
on your farm,
contact me at 870-
779-3609 or visit
Room 215 in the
Miller County
Courthouse..

Sincerely,

Jennifer Caraway

Jennifer Caraway,
County Extension
Agent-Agriculture

JWC:jds

Four States Cattle Conference

Even for old cowhands, each new year brings new challenges in the cattle market. The fifth annual Four States Cattle Conference will offer attendees the opportunity to learn the latest advice for navigating that marketplace, from advances in forage recommendations to cattle management methods and risk protection instruments.

The conference, scheduled **December 14th** at Texas A&M University in Texarkana, will feature agronomists, researchers and market experts from throughout the region.

Dr. Paul Beck, professor for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture at the Southwest Research and Extension Center in Hope, will chair the conference.

"Cattle health represents a significant cost to producers," Beck said. "Learning even a few of the lessons put forth in these conferences can more than offset the cost of attendance."

Topics Include:

Utilizing Legumes

Cowherd Heath

Market Outlook

Protect Revenue

Producer Panel

Trade Show

Speakers include Vanessa Corriher-Olson and Brian Triplett, both from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service; JJ Jones, Derrell Peel and Barry Whitworth, from the Oklahoma State University Extension Service; and Ryan Walker, from the Noble Research Institute.

Registration begins at 8:00 and the conference kicks off at 8:50 a.m. Cost is \$45 for individuals or \$70 for couples, and includes lunch. The conference will be held at the University Center building, 7101 University Avenue, Texarkana.

"We expect the cattle industry to change every year, and it certainly has," says Beck. "We try to tailor this conference to help producers prepare for this changing environment."

Winter Farm Management



Farm equipment is integral to the efficiency and sometimes, the the very survival of a farm enterprise. Yet often we see equipment left outside for the winter. While this policy may work a year or so, eventually that neglected piece is going to cost you in terms of performance and production.

Winter is a good opportunity to catch up on equipment maintenance including lubrication and fluid change of tractors, packing wheel bearings on trailering equipment, checking tires on trailers, field equipment, etc., & replacing floors in stock trailers.

During December, some days are better spent indoors than out. Now is a good time to summarize herd records for the year and compare to previous years to determine the production direction of the herd. Valuable summaries include changes in 205-day adjusted weaning weights, monthly calving distributions, culling percentages, calf crop percentages, cow age and body condition and calving internal changes. It is also a good month to summarize your financial records. Determine your cost for mineral, supplemental feed, vet medicine,

fertilizer, hay, weed control, etc. Knowing your cost to maintain a cow per year is very important and will aid in marketing decisions. Plan next year's budget and production plans.

▶ Proper free choice mineral and fresh water is just as important in the winter as in the summer time.

▶ Do not use frost-damaged Johnsongrass as pasture for seven days after the first killing frost. Delay pasturing for at least seven days or until the frosted material is completely dried out and brown in color. The Johnsongrass may contain prussic acid which can cause sudden death in cattle.

▶ Deworm cattle to prevent weight loss and inefficient use of hay and feed supplements going into the winter. For most locations in Arkansas the weather this past summer and fall were ideal for parasites and therefore cattle are probably carrying higher numbers than normal.

▶ Monitor cattle closely for signs of respiratory disease. The large variations in temperatures can contribute to decreases in respiratory immune function which may lead to pneumonia.

▶ Exclude cattle from access to oak trees whenever possible. Acorns are falling and are toxic to cattle, causing kidney damage and death.

▶ Turn bulls in with cow herd. Watch bulls' behavior carefully. Be sure they are seeking cows in estrus and are able to mount and breed cows.

▶ Breeding fall calving heifers should be about over by the end of December. It is important for heifers to breed early in their first breeding season and it's a good idea to breed heifers 30 days before the mature cow herd. Heifers should have had three chances to breed by the end of December.

There is a chance that cattle may be killed by eating only a few pounds of forage from plants belonging to the sorghum genus if the plants have been killed by frost. The same crops are considered safe prior to frost if properly fed.

Forage/Grazing Management Tips

- **Soil fertility management**

Fall and winter is a good time for correcting imbalances in pH. Soil fertility and pH should be monitored regularly.

▶ pH in pasture soil drops relatively fast because of leaching of calcium carbonates and lack of soil mixing like in a cropping system with frequent tillage.

▶ Correcting pH will take several months so it is wise to check lime requirement before next year's growing season.

▶ Collect at least 15 subsamples per pasture using a zig-zag course. Mix the subsamples and then submit one composite sample to the county extension office.

- **Weed control**

Winter annual weeds such as buttercup, thistle, and henbit are germinating now. Start spraying pastures where there were problems in the past. Late fall and winter spraying is very effective. For identification and control recommendations, refer to MP522 - <https://www.uaex.edu/publications/pdf/mp522.pdf> - or contact our office for your copy at 870-779-3609 (400 Laurel Suite 215, Texarkana, AR)

Grazing Management

For stockpiled bermudagrass and stockpiled fescue, use grazing methods that avoid trampling of forage and ensure high forage utilization, such as strip grazing. Strip grazing improves forage utilization and may double the number of grazing days compared to continuous grazing.

- **Stockpiled bermudagrass**

Graze out by January 1.

- **Stockpiled fescue**

Begin grazing.

Continued

- **Winter annual small grains/ryegrass**

Begin grazing once canopy height is at least 8 inches. Use grazing methods that avoid trampling of forage and ensure high forage utilization, such as rotational grazing or limit-grazing (limiting cow access time to annuals). Under limit-grazing, cows are routinely pastured on dormant pasture or fed hay in a dry-lot, but are allowed to eat their fill from a limited-access winter annual pasture several times per week. Limit-grazing of beef cows and calves on a mixture of wheat/rye/ryegrass (planted at 0.2 acre of per head) for two days per week produced the same cow, calf, and rebreeding performance as cows fed unlimited hay plus a supplement. Limit-grazed cows also consumer 30% less hay during the winter feeding period.

- **Brassica: turnips, turnip hybrid, rape**

Graze out by January 1. Use grazing methods that avoid trampling of forage and ensure high forage utilization, such as rotational grazing or limit-grazing.

Hay Management

Protect hay when feeding to reduce waste. Feed hay in rings to reduce hay waste. Unrolling hay increases hay waste unless it is done on a limit-feeding basis. Consider using a temporary electric wire fence to reduce waste from trampling and increases utilization of the hay. Unroll the bale, then string up an electrified polywire down the length of the line of hay. Place the wire about 30 inches high over the hay. Cattle will line up as if eating at a feed bunk.



Drought Cutting into Forage; Stresses Fledgling Winter Wheat



Arkansas' drought-ridden fall could turn into 3 seasons of trouble for livestock and forage producers, as winter wheat growers hope for another decent rain to keep their crop developing.

The December 7th Drought Monitor map shows 98% of Arkansas in drought this fall, with the most intensively dry area, listed as "extreme drought," affecting 22 counties stretching from central Arkansas to the Oklahoma state line.

On November 30th, the National Weather Service at Little Rock called the month, "the driest November and driest fall on record in portions of Arkansas."

"A dry fall for Arkansas wheat growers is a double-edged sword," said Jason Kelley, extension wheat and feed grains agronomist for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. "We need dry weather to harvest fall crops and get wheat planted, but prolonged dry weather has caused some issues with thin or variable stands in some fields this year."

"November is typically a wet month for us. Most areas have finally received a good rainfall with the last weather system, but some wheat will be very late emerging," he said. "Late emerging wheat may not have the tiller production needed to reach full yield potential."

John Jennings, professor-forage and extension specialist for the Division of Agriculture, said that a dry fall can have more overall negative impact on annual forage production than a dry summer for three reasons:

- It reduces late summer/fall forage production which is critical for fall and winter grazing.
- Delays planting of winter annual forages that would otherwise be grazed in fall/winter.
- Reduces plant development and increases cold temperature stress which can delay spring green-up and early spring grazing.

"So, a dry fall can have negative impact on three seasons of the year," he said, adding that this year, he's anticipating the following effects:

- **Early hay feeding** – "The lack of fall pasture growth caused many producers to start feeding hay in late September and October," Jennings said. "This will put pressure on those with limited hay in storage. Also, much of the hay harvested this summer is medium to low quality due to harvest delays caused by summer rains. Ironical that the summer was too wet for a good quality hay crop and the fall is too dry to make up for it."

Continued

- **Late fall planting** – “Many producers plant wheat or ryegrass in fall for winter grazing,” he said. “Much of the planting was greatly delayed or eliminated due to the dry conditions. So, the good quality forage normally available in late winter on many farms will not be available this winter.”
- **Dry weather desiccation from freezing weather** – “Dry winter conditions can cause more damage to forages than wet conditions,” Jennings said. “The reasons being that short drought-stressed forages – in this case winter annuals like wheat and ryegrass – provide little ground cover to insulate the soil from extreme temperature fluctuation.”

He said that air fills the soil pore space and is a poor insulator against freezing.

“Winter annuals still respire during winter but have little soil moisture to pull from,” Jennings said. “During extreme cold, these plants can literally freeze-dry causing stand thinning or loss. Dry winter conditions can also lead to injury of cold-sensitive bermudagrass varieties if extreme cold temperatures occur.”

Four States Agricultural Exposition

SAVE • THE • DATE

1 February 2018

Texarkana, Arkansas

4- States Ag Expo

Four States Fairgrounds
3700 50th Street, Texarkana, AR
8:30 – 3:30

CEU's are available for Texas residents

Topics:

- Fire Ants
- Blackberry Pests
- Pine Plantation Pests
- Pecan Management
- Parasite Control in Cattle
- Managing Forages
- Lawn Care
- Managing Weeds in Farm Ponds
- Dicamba Issues
- Cotton Management
- Estate Planning
- Feral Hog Control
- Arkansas Pesticide Applicator Class (2 PM)

FREE EVENT

Educational sessions are open to the public.

Open Trade Show

Call 870-779-3609 if interested in becoming a vendor.

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The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service is an equal opportunity/equal access/affirmative action institution. If you require a reasonable accommodation to participate or need materials in another format, please contact your County Extension office as soon as possible. Dial 711 for Arkansas Relay.