Cow Country Reporter

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In This Issue

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News from your CEO

CPL lost a dear friend and an avid supporter of our organization on August 12, 2023. Jerry "Tiger" Robinson, CPL Region 2 Director, was 79 years old. He was born in Lawrenceburg, TN. His family moved to Painton, MO. in 1947 where he and 3 brothers, Larry, Terry and Gary, were raised. Jerry was a star basketball player and received a scholarship to Peary State University in Clarksville, TN. where he majored in biology. His family moved to south Franklin Parish in 1962 and were row crop farmers. Jerry worked on the family farm until he was drafted in 1966 and the Army sent him to Korea for two years. He came home from the service, got married, had three children and continued his farming and ranching career. Jerry's parents taught their 4 sons to work hard, respect your elders and love this country we call the United States of America. Jerry was a mentor to many who came and asked for guidance in the cattle business. He and I shared many stories of life growing up in the country and how work ethic was a major attribute. Jerry, may you rest in peace! Thank you for sharing your gifts and talents freely.

We enter into Fall eagerly wanting relief from heat, drought and wildfires. Many cow/calf producers had a major decision to make, do I reduce my cow herd and/or buy hay? Forages were reduced to a minimum with lack of rain. We are going to experience higher calf prices this Fall compared to last year, however, our input costs will be sharply higher. Keep a close eye on the markets and take advantage of higher cull cow prices by selling older, open or poor disposition cows and save heifers to replace them.

Let us pray for cooler temperatures, adequate moisture and higher prices for our commodities.

Dave Foster, CEO

More than 100 volunteers help gather data used for drought detection, assistance

By: Olivia McClure

Everyone in Louisiana already knows rain has been hard to come by this summer.

But exactly how bad and widespread is the drought? Without enough data points, it can be hard to say — and that can prevent local farmers, ranchers and others from qualifying for assistance programs.

That's where a group of volunteers, many of them youth, led by the LSU AgCenter and Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation is stepping in to help.

Called the Water Rangers and armed with rain gauges provided by Farm Bureau, the volunteers are logging rainfall — or lack thereof — through a weather-reporting network called the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network, or CoCoRaHS.

"The CoCoRahs reporting system is one of the four weather data reporting systems that plays a major role in drought detection to qualify for federal funding programs," said Hannah Devall, animal science and agricultural literacy and awareness specialist with Louisiana 4-H.

Besides 4-H clubs, FFA groups, schools and Master Gardeners have joined the initiative.

"Those volunteers went through the official CoCoRaHS training, and we're excited to have more than 100 additional weather reporters submitting their observations as of the beginning of July 2023," said Jessica Lange, the Farm Bureau's commodity, public policy and promotions boards coordinator.

The idea for the Water Rangers came about last summer, when Louisiana experienced a drought that was milder than this year's but nevertheless caused problems in agriculture.

"During the summer of 2022, parts of Louisiana were far drier than the

(continued on page 2)

More than 100 volunteers help gather data used for drought detection, assistance

Drought Monitor reflected," Lange said, referring to the U.S. government's weekly map of drought location and intensity. "This concern was fielded through Louisiana Farm Bureau's Livestock Advisory Committee, which then began researching the various data collections that are included in the Drought Monitor, and found the number of weather reports throughout the state was woefully small."

"With the dry weather that we have experienced in the past couple of years, Louisiana producers were lacking the data necessary to aid them in qualifying for monetary relief programs," Devall added.

At www.cocorahs.org, visitors can see a map displaying data collected by the Water Rangers in Louisiana and their fellow citizen weather reporters across the country.

As Louisiana continues to deal with hot, dry weather, Devall said she is proud to see young people taking part in an important effort.

"We hope that more thorough data collection will aid our farmers and ranchers across the state," she said.

For information on joining the Water Rangers, contact Devall HDevall@agcenter.lsu.edu.

State cattle industry expects to lose up to $290M from heat and drought

By: Domenic Purdy

The state's cattle sector is expected to lose anywhere from $135 million to $290 million as a result of the record-breaking heat wave and drought, the LSU AgCenter reports.

While the entire agricultural industry is set for losses, cattle is expected to take the biggest hit, with the drought reducing hay production and forcing downsizing of herds.

The greatest loss is expected to come from producers weaning their calves from their mothers earlier than normal and from ranchers selling their herds, AgCenter economist Kurt Guidry says.

According to Guidry, 10% to 20% of calves were weaned from their mothers earlier than normal to reduce stress on the mothers, leading to lower weights and lower revenues for the raisers.

"A forced liquidation and early weaning are basically management strategies that producers are having to do to manage the amount of forage they have because grass is not growing," Guidry says.

According to Guidry, a lack of rainfall is expected to cost cattle raisers $62 million to $108 million in hay production alone.

As previously reported, other sectors like soybean and sugarcane harvests will be affected to a lesser extent, but the full effect will not be known until after harvest, says Michael Deliberto, an AgCenter economist.

Oklahoma Forage Production Rebounds

By: Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

Although drought persists north and south of Oklahoma, forage conditions have improved greatly in the state this summer. In late April, at the peak of drought this spring, over 64 percent of Oklahoma had some degree of dry or drought conditions with about 50 percent of the state in D2-D4 drought in the Drought Monitor. In mid-August, just 5.35 percent of the state had D2 or worse drought.

In May, the first seasonal NASS conditions report for 2023 showed that 54 percent of Oklahoma range and pastures were in poor or very poor condition. July was the seventh wettest July on record in Oklahoma. Most of the rain fell in the first half of July and by mid-July just eight percent of ranges and pastures were rated poor to very poor. By mid-August, hot, dry summer weather decreased range and pasture ratings in Oklahoma pastures to 20 percent poor to very poor.

In the August Crop Production report, USDA-NASS provided estimates of alfalfa and other hay production for major hay producing states. Oklahoma total hay production in 2023 is estimated to be up 58.2 percent year over year from the drought-reduced levels of 2022 and up 18.3 percent over the twenty-year average from 2002-2021. Total U.S. hay production is up 5.3 percent year over year.

Other hay production in Oklahoma is up 60.3 percent year over year and alfalfa hay production is up 41.8 percent over one year ago. Other hay typically makes up about 88 percent of total hay production in Oklahoma and 2023 production of other hay in Oklahoma is the highest on record in data back to 1974. Other hay production is up due to both a 17.9 percent increase in harvested other hay acreage over last year and a 36 percent year over year increase in other hay yield. In 2023, Oklahoma is the number two hay producing state following Texas and out-ranks several major hay producing states that typically produce more hay than Oklahoma, including Missouri, California, Nebraska, and South Dakota.

The sharp increase in hay production will restore the hay supply in Oklahoma to more typical levels after the drought-reduced level last year. This is despite the May 1 hay stocks level that was equal to the low level in 2007 and the lowest since 1979. The total hay supply for the coming year is the sum of May 1 hay stocks (beginning of hay crop year) plus current year hay production (Figure 1). Recover in forage conditions should allow cattle producers to stabilize herd inventories and likely begin some heifer retention.

Fewer Cattle on Feed and Lower Placements

By: Josh Maples, Mississippi State University

The latest Cattle on Feed Report was released on Friday and delivered a bit of surprise in the number of cattle placed on feedlots during July. The broader takeaway from the report is tighter feedlot supplies and plenty of support for cattle prices. However, there were some interesting details under the surface of the headline. Placements into feedlots with 1,000 or more head capacity totaled 1.62 million head. This was an 8.3 percent decline from July 2022 and was on the low end of pre-report expectations. With the abnormal exceptions of March and April 2020, this was the lowest monthly placement total since July 2017. Placements in May and June exceeded 2022 levels. So it may be the case that some cattle that might've usually been placed in July were pulled into feedlots earlier this year.

(continued on page 4)

Survive the Heat Wave: Expert Tips to Protect Cattle from Heat Stress

By: Paige Carlson

The heat is no joke, especially for cattle producers across the country as they look for ways to keep cattle cool and comfortable.

According to the USDA Agricultural Research Service's U.S. Meat Animal Research Center, in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Weather Service, heat stress forecasts are and will continue to affect major cattle producing states over the next several days.

Heat Rages On

Producers in the middle and lower Great Plains region, as well as those in the Southeast, can expect "emergency" levels of heat through the middle of next week. A large portion of the U.S. will continue to experience alerting and dangerous levels, as well.

Based on a poll of cattle producers, many of the areas suffering dry or droughty conditions will remain at the heat stress epicenter.

One rancher, based north of Forth Worth, Texas, says his area has been scorched since late June, and feeding hay for 22 of the past 25 months is "getting old and very costly."

Additionally, in central Texas, Pam Newman Williams notes pastures are terrible and with triple digit temperatures, there's a severe fire danger.

Unfortunately, much of the U.S. will not see any large precipitation levels over the next seven days, according to the NWS Weather Prediction Center, with little to no relief to dry areas.

Combat the Heat

Cattle producer, Derek Pohl, Dorchester, Neb., has turned to water to help protect livestock during these stressful heat events.

In a video posted online, Pohl shows a portable water tank with a sprinkler attached spraying water on cattle in a pen.

Cattle Heat Stress 082323

Pohl notes he's hauled almost 15,000 gallons of water so far to try to keep animals comfortable. While the lots aren't pretty, it's keeping cattle alive, he adds.

Along with spraying water on cattle in pens, there are additional considerations when working to help cattle through the heat.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln shares five things that may help your livestock in heat events.

1. **Water**—Not only is water effective when sprayed on livestock, it's imperative that cattle have access to plenty of clean water and that there is enough access space for all cattle, including calves, to get the water they need.

2. **Shade**—If possible, move cattle to a pasture that offers shade, or use portable windbreak panels to help provide shade.

3. **Air Movement**—A slight breeze can make a world of difference, so give cattle the opportunity to get a little wind, if there is one.

4. **Surface**—Access to surfaces with vegetation will keep cattle cooler.

5. **Additional Stress**—Consider rescheduling any events that might add stress to cattle, including gathering, weaning or preconditioning.

While keeping livestock cool is a priority, be sure to take care of yourself as well. Consider these five things and apply them to your work on the operation. Stay hydrated and stay safe.

Fall Calving in Hot Weather

By: Mark Z. Johnson, Oklahoma State University Extension Beef Cattle Breeding Specialist

The Oklahoma heat has arrived just as fall calving herds will begin seeing calves hit the ground. With this in mind, this week we focus on the challenges faced in fall calving herds in hot weather. The primary challenge is the impact high temperatures have on new born and young calves. While fall calving is often easier than calving in the winter and early spring, when temperatures are high, it can create unhealthy conditions for calves. The thermoneutral zone for a young calf is between 50 – 77 degrees Fahrenheit. Likewise, cows calving in hot weather are more likely to become overheated and exhausted sooner in the process than a cow calving in cooler temperatures. This can lead to prolonged calving and more stress on both cow and calf. When fall calving is taking place during high temperatures, beware of the following:

- Heat stress is actually harder on young calves than cold stress. When calves are heat stressed they lose appetite, eat less and are quicker to become dehydrated.
- New born calves have an immature "thermostat" and accordingly have more problems regulating body temperature during weather extremes.
- Shade and fresh water is critical. In addition to milk, calves need more fresh, cool water in hot weather to prevent dehydration, keep their rumen functioning correctly and maintaining health and appetite.
- Effects of heat stress on the dam can also negatively impact calves by reducing the transfer of passive immunity and subsequent weaning weights.
- Black hided calves are more susceptible to heat stress than calves of lighter shades.

Critical "Best Practices" for fall calving herds include providing ample shade for calving cows and the young calves. Shade and plenty of fresh water is vital. If calves don't have access to streams or ponds and are therefore dependent on water tanks, make sure the tank sits low enough and water levels inside are high enough for baby calves to have access.

Fewer Cattle on Feed and Lower Placements

While this report did not include the mix of heifers on feed, it is possible (though not certain) that some of the decline in placements was driven by a few more heifers being retained for breeding purposes. We'll have to wait until the October report for the next breakout of heifers vs. steers on feed for more context. When the beef herd does start expanding again, it will do so at the expense of fewer heifers heading to feedlots.

The late summer period is always an interesting period to follow cattle on feed dynamics. Feedlot supplies typically hit their seasonal low point for the year in August or September before ramping back up into the fall. What that seasonal low-point will be in 2023 is especially interesting given the contraction in beef cow and calf supplies the past few years.

Marketings were 5.3 percent lower during July than from a year ago. Altogether, the report showed estimates of 11.03 million cattle on feed as of August 1st. This is a 2.3 percent (or 259,000 head) decline from August 1, 2022 and is the lowest monthly total since September 2019.

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