



Let's Start with the FACTS:

- * Drought, especially in Texas, is a recurring event; thus, always be prepared (to the fullest extent possible) for the next one.
- * If prepared, then your pastures should be able to support your herd for **at least 3 months** with limited supplementation.
- * If NOT prepared, then you quickly go from supplementation to **SUBSTITUTION**, which does not work for traditional ranchers.
- * Drought limits (*can eliminate*) forage growth, can kill current forages or make them go dormant, can result in overgrazing, increase your chance for a wildfire, and can reduce pond water quality.
- * The current drought is extreme and exacerbated by **skyrocketing** feed and transport costs, inflation, fertilizer cost resulting in lower-quality hay (less used), and roughage availability.
- * **This too shall pass.** The Good Lord will send down rain again and most folks will *unfortunately*, soon forget about the economic pain until the next drought.
- * Hay **is not** a supplement unless it contains more than 16% crude protein.
- * Anytime you bring a bale of hay through your gate, you are **substituting** growing forages and significantly reducing your net profit potential.
- * A "decent" bale of hay will cost you at least \$80 right now, which is about \$160/ton (FOB) + a delivery charge.
- * Your long-term economic sustainability is in serious jeopardy if you're relying on \$400/ton of feed as a supplement.
- * Thousands of cattle are currently going to the sale barn, thus saturating the market. Develop an effective plan before the next drought to hold onto your livestock a little longer than the others.
- * This is Part I of our "Surviving Drought" Cheat Sheet 12-part series. Additional "Parts" will get into more details regarding specific steps to take now to get better prepared for the next drought.

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"Cheat Sheet"

SURVIVING DROUGHT: PART 1: OVERVIEW

Immediately, Put the Following on Your "To Do" List:

- * Treat this drought as the emergency that it is and get serious about minimizing the economic toll on your operation as you navigate through the storm.
- * Take inventory of what you have in regards to liquid cash, infrastructure (e.g., feeding pens, old barn that can serve as a commodity barn), livestock (e.g., cows vs. heifers; good vs. bad cows), average tons per acre of standing forage and its condition.
- * Evaluate your water situation; quality and quantity. Significant issues can arise from ponds that are less than 1/4 full due to concentrated nutrients, manure, and urine. Thoroughly clean your water troughs and tanks to maximize water intake.
- * Evaluate the economics of dry lotting replacement heifers and cows and backgrounding calves on your property or in a feed yard. **Rarely** is it economically feasible to drylot replacement heifers and cows unless your goal is to hold onto your genetics.
- * If you have some forage and multiple pastures available: (1) sort heifers from cows; (2) early-wean calves and sell or feed them out; (3) **strategically** supplement according to forage quantity and quality and animal class, weight, and condition; (4) do not feed the lowest cost hay, mixed feed, or cube you can find; (5) do not over-feed; and (6) make sure your herd health program is up to date.
- * If pastures currently look like a drylot, then you must sell some animals. One of the worse things you can do right now is feed hay and mixed feed in "spent" pastures; they need to rest so that they are ready to rebound as soon as rains come again.
- * Talk to your neighbors and try to get one or more "large" groups of cattle put together and send them all to the auction barn at the same time (need about 50,000 lb. on the hoof, per semi-load).
- * Get other like-minded ranchers together and combine resources and knowledge. You can save a lot of money by purchasing bulk ingredients and mixing your own feed but even on a small-scale, your capital investment (assuming you have a tractor) is a minimum of \$60,000 (mixer-grinder, commodity barn, storage containers, molasses tank, initial bulk commodity purchases, etc.).
- * Get ready to manage "weeds" as soon as we get rain. Weeds are first up, especially on bare ground.
- * **Remember:** Texas Ranchers are resilient, thus Pray, Persevere, and Hold Tight.

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