



GRAZING LAND DROUGHT PLAN

For Your Farm



NAME: _____

FARM: _____

YEAR _____

Drought Management Plan

Drought is a major factor in grazing land management. Drought causes long-term effects and recovery is a long-term process. To manage successfully under the constant threat of drought, a good grazing management plan with a drought component should be developed.

There are numerous impacts to grazing lands associated with drought. They are:

- Loss of vegetative cover that results in increased runoff and erosion, reduction of average carrying capacity, potential reduction in water quality and reduced quality of wildlife habitat
- Increase in undesirable plants
- Increased potential of poisonous plant consumption by herd
- Economic loss (reduced income and increased costs)
- Loss of herd genetics through livestock sales

Factors to know before drought occur:

- Knowledge of temperature, moisture, and growth relationships of plants
- Knowledge of normal climatic variations
- Knowledge of the relationship between maintaining livestock numbers with supplemental feed versus reducing livestock numbers
- Proper grazing management prior to drought improves plant vigor and moderates the effects of drought
- Stocking rate is the **most important** tool, especially under drought conditions

What will you do when planning for a drought?

- Plan for the production of emergency forage sources. Do you have additional fields you can move your animals to (leased, owned, etc) Yes or No _____ If yes, state when and where you will move your animals _____
- Will you dry lot livestock Yes or No _____ If yes, please note that this will require facilities and increases labor and manure.
- Will you early wean calves Yes or No ____ This reduces cows' demand for forage by 20%.
- Will you selectively market calves Yes or No ____ if yes, older, heavier calves that are carrying condition should be the first ones marketed. The younger, lighter-weight calves will consume less feed and be more efficient in feed utilization than the older ones.
- Will you sell cows Yes or No _____ If yes, cows that have lost a calf, cows that are open, cows with physical problems and old cows should be the ones to be considered for culling
- Will you designate a sacrifice pasture where supplements are fed Yes or No _____ this limits negative impacts to a confined area. Do not designate a sacrifice area near waterbodies.
- Will you store harvested hay to keep losses at a minimum Yes or No ____ Storage procedures that reduce losses are economically critical under normal conditions and are even more important during times of limited forage supply.

What to do after a drought:

- Resist temptation to increase livestock numbers immediately following drought
- Adjust length of recovery period depending upon drought severity and climatic conditions following the drought