

August 2017

LEASED PASTURES DURING DROUGHT

No matter if you own the cattle or own the pasture, or maybe both, when dry weather reduces pasture growth way below original expectations, adjustments are needed. Continuing to graze while ignoring the dry weather and reduced pasture growth risks damage to both the pasture and the livestock. Landowners risk having the pasture become overgrazed, resulting in future weed problems, reduced long-term production, and lowered value. The cattle owner risks poor performance or health of the livestock due to less forage and lower quality feed. This can lead to higher supplemental feed costs or being forced to sell the cattle.

Ideally, you have a written lease and have included clauses that identify conditions that require removal of animals. If so, good for you. Check those conditions now and act on them if needed.

Unfortunately, many pastures are rented without written leases or without drought clauses. If this describes your situation, now might be a good time to initiate discussion about how you will handle the grazing if growing conditions don't improve enough soon. Planning now helps avoid arguments and panicky decisions later.

This discussion should include who makes the decision to remove the cattle and what criteria will be used to base that decision. Also discuss any adjustment in rent because less grazing was provided. Usually, it is best to design the agreement so both landowner and cattle owner share in losses associated with drought. This may be especially important if you hope to conduct business together in the future.

Drought can cause a lot of headaches. But good planning and communication can reduce some of the pain.

Dr. Bruce Anderson, Extension Forage Specialist
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
314 Keim Hall—East Campus
Lincoln NE 68583-0915
402-4742-2577
banderson1@unl.edu



University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension educational programs abide with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.. Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of