

DEVELOPING RELIABLE LIVESTOCK WATER

Ponds and creeks often dry up. If you use them to water your cattle, maybe it is time to develop a more reliable water source.

Many ponds and creeks dry up during dry weather. Maybe rain will replenish them this spring, but shouldn't you ask yourself "is this the best way to water my cattle during summer?" This might be a good time to develop more wells or pipelines to reliably put water into tanks.

Tank water can be cooler and offer easier access than ponds or creeks. It often is healthier for cattle, and they usually prefer it to ponds or creeks. When cows walk into ponds and creeks, they stir mud and sediments into the water and often deposit animal wastes. No wonder calves consistently choose tank water over ponds when given a choice!

Investing in tanks probably will actually pay for itself. Reports from Montana, Oregon, Canada, and elsewhere show that the higher water quality found in tanks can increase cattle gains. Calves can weigh an extra 50 pounds at weaning when tank water is available instead of dirty ponds. Yearling steers can gain an extra three to four tenths of a pound per day. With this much added performance, pumping water out of ponds, creeks, or wells and into tanks can pay off in just a few years. And if it's a question of having water or not having water, the payoff is even more immediate.

In addition, pumping water into tanks usually improves grazing distribution by attracting cattle to graze areas near the tanks instead of spending time standing in or around the ponds or creek. This can increase your pasture's carrying capacity or grazing season.

Think of it — better grazing, higher gains, and reliable water. So much to gain and so little to lose.

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