

MANAGEMENT NOTES January through April



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How have you and your land resource withstood the ravages of the drought? Continue to evaluate the current animal use to determine if there will be adequate resources for 2012. Also, please make sure you review your and your family's mental and physical health and well-being. Drought and the pressures it brings can impact the mental and physical health of the family.

It's winter and time to think about going from winter into spring management. As we move forward it is probably dry if the forecasters are right. Regardless of what the weather has done since November, major damage has occurred and continues to occur to the plants in Texas rangeland and woodlands. In addition, wildlife continues to suffer and many populations have seen losses. Blame it on lack of water, reduced natural forage and feed, cold, and all the other things that drought and winter bring.

Needless to remind most of you, once we get good rains and see recovery starting, it will take a long time for the vegetation to recover to what was there or maybe never. I encourage you to plan now how to manage the recovery of yourself, your family and your resources even if the drought continues. Your future is probably best controlled in your management plans!

Some Ideas to Consider

Hope you had a positive evaluation of the management of your resources and finances for 2011. Also, don't forget to adjust your 2012 management and, above all, get your five-year plan updated.

Here are some points to consider in the next few months.

- As always, water should be your highest priority. Without adequate water, animal performance and forage production management will be difficult at best.
- Continue monitoring your water resources for availability and quality. Develop options well before they are less than optimal. Evaluating 2012 water needs will allow developing your options before they are needed. Be prepared to move animals to available water if possible. Hauling water is expensive.
- If extreme cold temperatures occur and the drought is continuing, check water sources more often. Frozen water, even for a few hours, can create stress in animals. Water temperatures above 50° F can help animals.
- Review rainfall records for the past 12 months, and maybe longer, plus the forecast for the next three to six months. Determine if the current soil moisture availability is adequate for the rest of the winter and spring seasons. It probably won't be unless we have good soaking rains and/or significant snow. Heavy, intense rainfall usually results in more runoff than infiltration. Even if current soil moisture is fair to good, projected plant growth will probably be below average if drought conditions continue as predicted. If drought conditions do continue, prepare for well-below-average plant growth in 2012 and 2013.

- Evaluate the status of grazing and browse use more often. The amount of use on highly desirable species is critical, especially during drought. If use was heavy this year, plan to reduce the pressure if possible. Regardless, plan to reduce 2012-2013 stocking rates to allow the preferred species to recover and improve next year.
- Routinely check and repair or replace, where possible, all improvements such as fences, water sources and equipment.
- If you haven't already, complete the analysis of the 2011 financial data. Evaluate and adjust the 2012 and five-year management and economic plans based on current and projected weather plus current and projected economic conditions.
- Use the 2011 broadleaf and woody plant control sites evaluations to finalize the 2012 management plans.
- Use the evaluation of any prescribed burn areas done 2011 against the objectives. Finalize their management plans for their management in 2012. Start identifying and planning potential 2012 and beyond burns areas even if the drought appears it will continue.
- Continue the management for 2011 seeded areas to insure long term management is accomplished. Evaluate and plan the their management requirements for 2012.
- Finalize plans for any seeding opportunities for 2012 and begin preparing for seeding. If dry weather is present and will probably continue, delay seeding. If the soil has been prepared, consider a cover crop for 2012.
- Update your land resource records through new photos or other means. If you haven't started a land resource record, start now. If you use photographs, establish points that you can return to and photograph at least once each year.
- If you haven't developed a business management plan, please get started!

Remember, manage for today and the future based on what you have documented, what is currently happening, and what is planned or predicted for future. Include how you expect weather, economic conditions and your personal life to interact. Management is never easy! *AA*