

MANAGEMENT NOTES March through June



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Hope you and your land resource withstood the ravages of the drought and winter. The need to continue to evaluate animal condition and their use of the vegetation is required to insure there will be adequate resources for the 2012 growing season. Also, continue to watch your and your family's mental and physical health and well-being. Drought, and the pressures it brings, can create many impacts on the mental and physical health of the family.

Winter is in full swing with cold and hopefully wet conditions. It's time to think about the end of winter and adapting management into the spring months. If it is still dry as the forecasters have been predicting or we are getting moisture, remember that until we have at least a year of near average to above average precipitation, we are not out of drought conditions. Also, we have had long-term major damage to plants and the damage is far from over. If drought continues, the plants in Texas rangeland and woodlands are under heavy stress. Wildlife continues to suffer and many populations continue to see losses. Blame it on lack of water, reduced natural forage and feed, cold and all the other things that drought and extreme weather bring.

Needless to remind most of you, when we get good rains and see recovery starting, it will take a long time for the vegetation to recover to what it was or maybe it will never fully recover. Plan how to manage the recovery of yourself, your family, and your resources even if the drought continues. Your future is best controlled through managing your mental, physical and production resources through careful and well thought out 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 plan 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 alternate plans well before the water is less than optimal. Evaluating 2012 water needs now will allow developing your options and being prepared before they are needed. Be prepared to move animals to available water if needed. Hauling water is expensive.
 - During extreme cold temperatures, check water sources often. Frozen water, even for a few hours, can create stress in animals. Water temperatures above 50° F can help animals better cope with low temperatures.
- Continue to review rainfall records for at least the past 12 months and maybe longer plus the forecast for the next three to six months. Determine if the current soil moisture available is adequate for late winter and early spring growth. We need good soaking rains and/or significant snow to rebuild both surface and subsoil soil moisture. 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. 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 often. The amount of use on highly desirable species is critical, especially during drought. If use was heavy in 2011, 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, be sure to analyze the 2011 financial data. Evaluate and adjust the 2012 annual five-year management and economic plans based on the current conditions of your resources in relation to current and projected weather plus current and projected economic conditions.
 - Finalize the 2012 management plan for 2011 weed control areas.
 - If you were able to prescribe burn areas, evaluate their growth against the burn objectives. Finalize their management plans for 2012. Start identifying and planning potential 2013 and beyond burn areas even if the drought appears it will continue. Be prepared!
 - Continue the management for 2011 seeded areas to insure long term management is accomplished. Evaluate and plan the 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 or nurse 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, managing for today and the future should be 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! *!!*