



MANAGEMENT NOTES FOR MAY THROUGH JULY

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And the drought goes on! As of early April, precipitation (as rain, snow, or ice) since the beginning of 2013 hasn't been any where near average in most of the state. 2013 was heavy events followed by dry periods. The result is continued drought conditions over most of Texas. Projections for the May through July period are not encouraging as shown in Seasonal Drought Outlook (Figure 1). Except for East Texas and the coast, drought is expected to continue or intensify. Also, there are indications that an El Nino area may develop in the Pacific Ocean this fall, but that was predicted in 2012 and didn't happen. As to the probability of precipitation over the three months, the Climatic Prediction Center outlook shows a 50-50 chance of receiving average precipitation (Figure 2). Temperature projections are for at least a 33% probability of being above average. With virtually all of Texas under drought conditions since late 2010, at best, average conditions will only maintain the vegetation condition.

Trees have really been suffering during the drought. Trees of all sizes have been stressed and died. Arborists and foresters are predicting that trees will continue to die even after the drought ends. The prolonged level of stress is the reason. If large trees are surrounded by shrubs and trees, particularly invasives, the stress level is high (Figure 3). Objects like large trees, shrubs for cover and similar vegetation should be evaluated as to the role they play in your operation and how the loss from drought would change the operation.

Management Thoughts

If the drought continues as predicted, management will require more attention to maintain the habitat (vegetation and water) for wildlife and domestic animals. Texas is entering its fourth consecutive year of intensive drought. Carrying

capacity, water availability, and other considerations will continue to be more important. Maintaining the potential productivity of the habitat (ability to meet current animal needs and be able to recover when the drought ends) should be the primary consideration. If the habitat is degraded, recovery will be difficult at best and probably require an extended recovery time.

Water Facilities

The condition, quality, and availability of water continue to be the major concerns. Having enough water of a good quality is key. Something often overlooked is the role of water temperature on animals. With summer coming, if water temperature can be maintained in the 60-75 degree range, animals can handle the heat easier. Just like we don't like drinking warm (or hot water), animals don't either. Their performance is usually limited by warm water temperatures.



Much of the eastern third of Texas appears will remain out of drought while the rest of the state will continue in drought.



Another consideration is the possibility of open water sources (troughs, pond, etc.) losing large amounts of water through evaporation. The larger the exposed water surface area the higher the evaporation can be.

Weather Factors

During 2013, many parts of Texas received near average precipitation but often it came in heavy downpours. When this happens, runoff for ponds may have been limited and short-lived. If this precipitation pattern continues, will there be enough water for your animals? If not, how will you change your management to supply water or will you just not use some areas?

Heat is a major concern during the summer months. Will your animals have shade in the areas that they will be grazing or browsing? Can you supply temporary shade or change their use patterns by using salt, mineral, or other attractants. Is a new water supply a possibility?

Using Records

If you have been maintaining records including financial, weather and pasture status, they can be a help in making management decisions. Combine your records with online services such as the U.S. Drought Monitor ([www.http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/](http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/)), U. S. Seasonal Drought Outlook (http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/sdo_summary.html), and Three Month Outlooks (<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/90day/>) to help with management decisions. Explore these resources to see if they can help you with your decision making.

Land and Physical Resources

Your land resources are the base of your operation. Without land you don't have habitat (space) to operate. Managing to maintain the productivity during drought can pose difficult decisions.

The condition of the habitat, how it is divided, the condition of fences, where water and facilities are located and their condition, and the condition and value of equipment should be evaluated at least annually. Repairs and replacement need to be built into the annual and 5-year plans.

A Thought

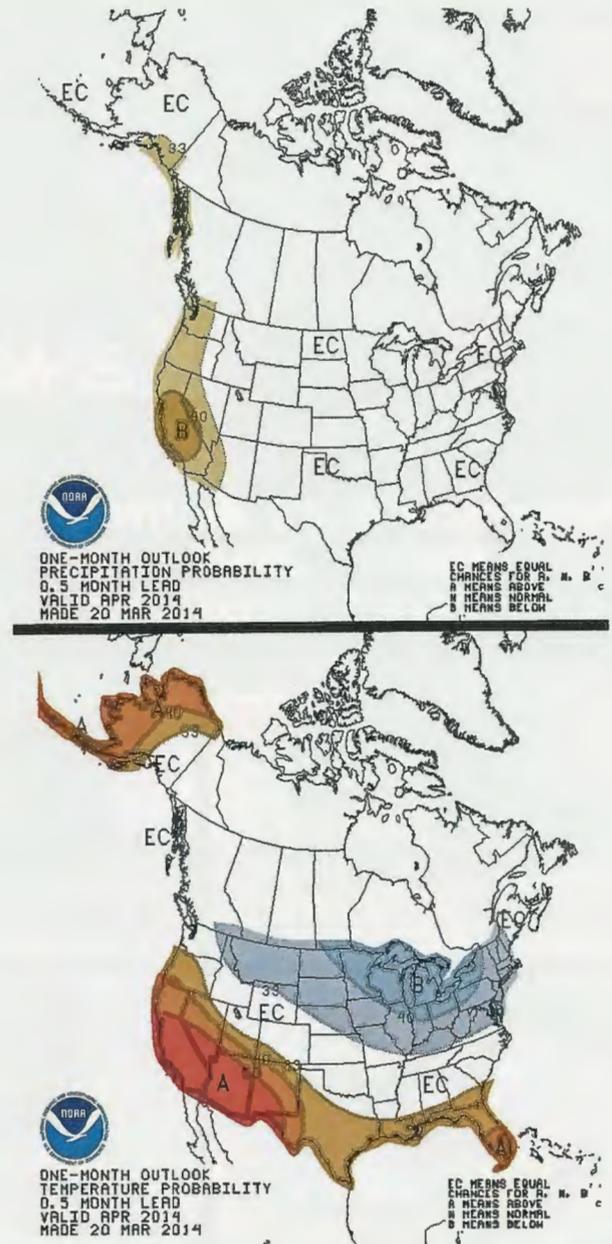
I remember the drought of the 1950's around San Antonio. We had wells into the Edwards Aquifer and irrigated to produce hay, silage, and some grain for the registered herd. Even as a high school student, summer work was hauling hay, driving silage trucks, and feeding cattle. Grazing for the cattle, it seemed, was more for exercise rather than grazing. Hard work was my contribution, but the management decisions that went into keeping the production to pay the bills was understood by even us 'kids.'

Drought is never an easy time for folks trying to make their living from the land. Having known and listened to some folks in Kansas who went through the 1930's Dust Bowl drought, has given me some understanding of the physiological effects people can go through. There have been dust storms in the Panhandle. If the drought continues, the dust storms could develop in other areas.

Until next time, hope you get some good rains! 🌧️



Dry streams and stock ponds create hard choices during drought.



Through July, precipitation (top) is expected to have an equal probability to be within average range and the temperature is expected to have at least a 33% probability of being above average over all but the northern part of the state.