

Drought Resources

for Chelan County landowners

What is drought?

For ranchers in the United States, drought can be defined as too little soil water to meet the needs of dominant forage species during their rapid growth windows.

A “dry” year may be considered a drought. A short term drought may require that ranchers make management adjustments to get by. Net returns for that year may be impacted, but the ranch's fixed assets often remain viable.

A “multi-year drought” may involve 3-5 years or more of continued moisture shortage. Each year the impacts of the drought are multiplied by the shortage of resources and the management decisions made the previous year(s). As the drought continues, resource flexibility and alternatives shrink. Economic reserves often get depleted and stress levels increase during multi-year drought. (Source: Cotton, Monitoring Rangelands, a Practical Reference)



How might drought impact you?

Droughts may have direct consequences, such as reduced crop yields, livestock losses, or pond depletion. These direct impacts may then lead to secondary consequences such as physical and emotional stress, or financial insecurity.

Some of the more common types of drought impacts are listed below. (Source: National Drought Mitigation Center - visit their website for additional information and to create your drought management plan - see Resources on page 2)

Pasture

- Reduced productivity of rangeland
- Range fires
- Increased weeds
- Wind and water erosion of soils

Water

- High cost/unavailability of water for livestock
- Reservoir or pond levels dropping
- Reduced flow from springs
- Water quality problems (e.g., increased water temperature, contaminants)



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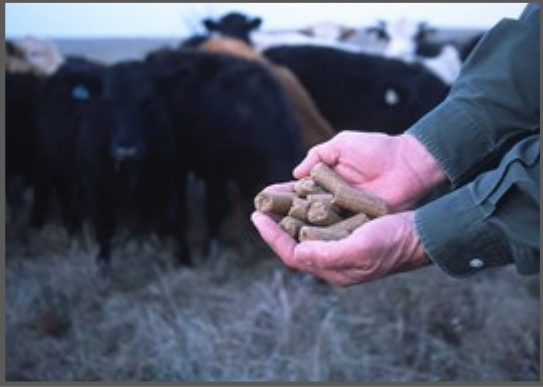
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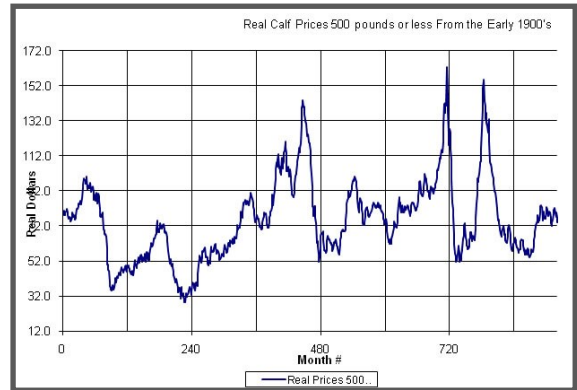
Herd

- Forced reduction of foundation stock
- Decreased livestock gains
- Greater disease, pestilence, health issues for livestock
- High cost/unavailability of feed for livestock



Financial

- Inability to Support Ranch Employees
- Inability to fulfill debt obligations
- Decrease in capital
- Increase in debt/asset ratio



Wildlife/Environment

- Reduction and degradation of fish and wildlife habitat
- Migration and concentration (loss of wildlife in some areas and too many in others)
- Loss of wetlands
- Loss of biodiversity



Social/Family

- Mental and physical stress (e.g., anxiety, depression, loss of security)
- Increased respiratory ailments
- Reduction or modification of recreational activities
- Off-farm/ranch employment required



Resources:

Visit the following websites for updates on the drought conditions in your area as well as options for disaster relief funds for farmers, ranchers, and orchardists.

National Drought Mitigation Center - <http://drought.unl.edu/ranchplan/Overview.aspx>

Washington State Department of Agriculture - <http://agr.wa.gov/PestFert/natresources/Drought.aspx>

Washington State Department of Ecology - www.ecy.wa.gov/drought

Washington State University - <http://drought.wsu.edu/>

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