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**It's Deja Vu . . . again!**

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In the words of old Yankee Hall of Famer Yogi Berra, it sure seems like deja vu all over again. Much of Ohio and large parts of the Midwest saw it in 1999, and 2002, and 2005, and yet again in 2007 . . . significantly below normal precipitation in spring and early summer which set the stage for below normal production of high quality hay and pasture.

Here in Fairfield County, a few spots in the northwestern half of the county received up to an inch of well needed rainfall last Sunday. In the lower part of the county, it amounted to only 1 to 3 tenths of an inch. Since April 1, we are more than 5 inches below normal for precipitation.

Much of Ohio, and certainly Indiana and beyond are in a similar situation. But then, Yogi also said, "If the world were perfect, it wouldn't be." That being said, until significant rainfall returns, in coming weeks we'll spend much time in this publication reviewing many of the management alternatives that we've explored in the past for maintaining the cow herd in spite of the lack of the 'traditional' feedstuffs we'd typically be utilizing.

With wheat presently coming off around the state, one of the practices we'll explore further in coming weeks is that of planting an annual forage in wheat fields after straw is harvested, manure is spread, and weeds are controlled. If oats are the choice for an annual forage this year, there's not really a reason to be in a big hurry. We've found the highest yielding, highest quality oats for forage have been planted the first of August in the past.

Wean early spring born calves soon if not already. We reviewed that in [last week's Ohio BEEF Cattle letter](#). After the calves are weaned and the cow's nutrient requirements are reduced, if you don't get your harvested wheat fields seeded to an annual forage, you may plan to graze wheat stubble and the volunteer wheat that emerges when some showers do occur. If there's a decent stand of volunteer forage, one might even consider applying a little ammonium nitrate to those fields to enhance growth. Beyond that, begin planning to graze corn stalks after corn harvest.

People have mentioned that feeding corn is too expensive. Is it? Do the math. For easy figuring assume that one pound of corn will nutritionally replace about 2 pounds of hay. Plus, it's a whole bunch easier and less expensive per ton to haul. As an alternative to offering what will likely be "expensive" supplemental hay at a time when cows might easily utilize a little more energy, feed the cows 2-3 pounds of whole corn per head per day. Feed it on the dry ground under an electric fence wire and the cows and calves won't waste any. If you have adequate bunk space, you might find wheat midds, gluten or DDGS could be an alternative that's less expensive than corn.

If you do still have forage that's suitable for grazing, allow a minimum of 3-4 inches of top growth to remain in the field. Also, extend rest periods. Jeff McCutcheon addressed those concerns [in last week's letter](#) and Mark Landefeld reinforces them again this week below.

If your forage growth has stopped, pull the cows off pasture and feed hay or silage. During the 1999 drought, one local cattleman pulled his cows from the pastures in late July and August and

fed them corn silage he had remaining from the previous year. His rested pastures recovered much more quickly that fall, and were significantly more productive than others' in the County that were allowed to be grazed down to the plant roots. Manage for the long haul - don't destroy a productive pasture just to survive the short term!

If a pasture must be overgrazed and abused, make sure it's a mature, well established one. It will recover more quickly than younger seedings.

Palpate and cull now before everyone else does. Moving culls now will not only save feed, but prices are also pretty good . . . preg check and cull soon, beat the rush.

Assuming it will rain again, plan to apply ammonium nitrate to resting pastures - especially the fescue - some time around August 1.

When a little pasture top growth does return, don't be impatient about grazing it. If you must graze on it, only top graze it lightly and move the cattle on.

As mentioned previously, we'll expand on some of these thoughts in the coming weeks. In the mean time, revisit our "Drought '07" website at <http://beef.osu.edu/Drought07.html> for more detail on managing in times of expensive and limited feed supply.