

## When Water and Feed Supplies Become a Concern

Drought usually gets its reputation from its impact on crops. But its impact on livestock can be equally dramatic. Hot, dry weather increases the water needs of livestock but often decreases water supplies. Crops may not yield as planned, causing a feed shortage. Consequently, farmers may face special challenges, including decisions about whether to buy feed or sell livestock.

### Provide Adequate Water

Ample drinking water is vital to animals during hot and humid conditions. Animals cool themselves by panting (water loss from the lungs) and through water evaporation from the skin. Increased respiration during hot weather is especially important for pigs and other animals that do not sweat. Animals must replace the water loss to cool themselves.

- Maintain access to water.
- Keep water containers clean.
- Adjust the drinking space for the size and number of animals in the pen or group.
- Excessive volumes of water grow warm and stale throughout the day.
- Check the water delivery systems periodically for plugs or other problems.

### Water Requirements

Water requirements may increase to double the normal intake for animals during hot weather. Clean, fresh water is important. If animals do not meet their water needs, they may refuse to eat, experience lowered production, become sick or die.

Water supplies also may become a problem as the drought wears on. Wells and piping may be inadequate if water demand increases dramatically; shallow wells and streams may dry up. You may need to transport water. Contact your local emergency government office or your county Extension office for information on water supply assistance.

Some general water estimates for various conditions and animals are as follows.

#### Daily water intake for beef cattle at 88°F:

- Cows: 16.5 gallons for nursing calves; 14 gallons for bred dry cows and heifers.
- Bulls: 18 gallons.
- Growing cattle: 9 gallons for 400 pound animal; 12 gallons for 600 pound animal; 14 gallons for 800 pound animal.
- Finishing cattle: 14 gallons for 600 pound animal; 17 gallons for 800 pound animal; 20 gallons for 1,000 pound animal; 22.5 gallons for 1,200 pound animal.

#### Daily water intake for dairy cattle at 80°F:

- Dry cows (for maintenance and pregnancy): 16.2 gallons for 1,400 pound animal; 17.3 gallons for 1,700 pound animal.
- Lactating, 1,400 pound cows (for maintenance and milk production): 17.9 gallons for 20 pounds milk production; 24.7 gallons for 60 pounds milk production; 38.7 gallons for 80 pounds milk production; 45.7 gallons for 100 pounds milk production.
- Heifers: 3.3 gallons for 200 pound animal; 6.1 gallons for 400 pound animal; 10.6 gallons for 800 pound animal; 14.5 gallons for 1,200 pound animal (for maintenance and pregnancy).

#### Average daily water intake for swine:

- Breeding herd: 2 to 3 gallons for gestating sows and boars; 4 to 5 gallons for lactating sows.
- Young pigs: 0.5 to 1 gallon for weaned pigs (15 to 50 pounds); 1 gallon for growing pigs (50 to 120 pounds); 1.5 to 2 gallons for finishing pigs (120 pounds to market).

### **Average daily water intake for small ruminants:**

- Sheep and goats: 0.75 to 1.5 gallons for mature females and males.

Increase amounts for hot, dry conditions.

### **When Feed Becomes an Emergency**

Feed supplies may run low if crops are compromised or lost because of dry weather. Farmers unable to afford additional feed may face an emergency situation. Some considerations include:

**Develop an inventory of livestock numbers and feed supplies.** An inventory will help you plan for current and long-term feed needs.

**Get advice and assistance.** When a feed shortage is imminent, contact a nutritionist or your county Extension office for guidance and your lender for early discussion of potential problems or needs.

Two major options when facing a feed shortage are to:

- Buy or obtain additional feed. Feed assistance may be available from relief groups. Volunteer organizations typically offer hay lifts during drought years. Contact your county Extension office for more information.
- Sell nonessential animals. The money received can help buy additional feed for remaining animals.

This information was adapted from a fact sheet written by Diego M. Gimenez, Jr., Extension Animal Scientist.