

"everybody has a plan till you hit them in the mouth," etc...so why plan? We plan because the planning process is useful even if we don't always follow the plan to the letter. Just like our quarterback will call more successful plays if he has trained for all types of game situations, our management will benefit from creating and discussing the spectrum of scenarios we might encounter; dry, wet, or in-between.

Table 2. Example Culling Priority Groups

Priority	Culling Criteria
First	"Normal", i.e. open, > 12 yrs old, broken mouth, etc...
	First calf heifers
Next	Late-bred cows
	Under performing cows
Last	Cows ≤ BCS 3

For illustration purposes, let's look at stocking rate decisions as an example of how we might apply our scenario development system. Stocking rate is a decision all ranch managers make, it may be the only real option we have to mitigate drought effects on some operations, and it can be controversial when ownership and management or, lessor and lessee disagree. Setting pre-determined culling priority groups is one way to provide a structure for herd reduction (see Arizona Ranchers' Management Guide - Russell Gum, George Ruyle, and Richard Rice,

Editors, and Destocking Strategies During Drought – Gill and Pinchak, Texas A&M Extension for more information). Table 2 outlines an example progressive systematic culling strategy that starts with obvious choices (i.e. open cows) and moves to more drastic ones, but still maintains a minimum base herd for operational, economic, and genetic reasons. We could also look at the opposite situation and set up a progressive series of management options for increasing animal numbers. These could include herd building choices such as retaining heifers or temporary measures such as buying stockers.

Table 3. Example Strategic Drought Management Scenario Planning Worksheet

Scenario	National Indicator	Regional Indicator	Local Indicators		Trigger	Management Action
	Palmer Drought Severity Index	Flood Control District (Avg Anni Precip)	Monitoring Data (Bare Ground)	Key Forage Plant Condition Mid-June	Site Specific Precipitation Timing/Distribution	Herd Inventory and/or Culling
"Best"	Extremely Moist	125%	25% < desired	Western Wheat "green", ~ 12"	2.0", North Pasture by August 1	Run stockers
	Very Moist	115%	15% < desired	Western Wheat "green", ~ 10"	1.75", North Pasture by August 1	Retain heifers
	Moderately Moist	105%	5% < desired	Western Wheat "blue/green", ~ 10"	1.5", North Pasture by August 1	Normal culling
"Average"	Mid Range	100%	~ % desired	Western Wheat "blue/green", ~ 8"	1.25", North Pasture by August 1	Cull priority group 1***
	Moderate Drought	80%	5% > desired	Western Wheat "blue", ~ 8"	1.5", North Pasture by August 10	Cull priority group 2
	Severe Drought	70%	15% > desired	Western Wheat "blue", ~ 6"	1.25", North Pasture by August 10	Cull priority group 3
"Worst"	Extreme Drought	60%	25% > desired	Western Wheat "blue", ~ 4"	1.0", North Pasture by August 10	Cull priority group 4

*** Notes: Wheatgrass utilization heavier than anticipated, 1 week of hot dry wind, bare ground stable, hit rain target but late, culled a few from group 2

At this point we have created a series of drought severity scenarios based on national, regional and local information. We have used science and personal experience. We have also created a series of management decisions concerning animal numbers. Now, let's put it all together.

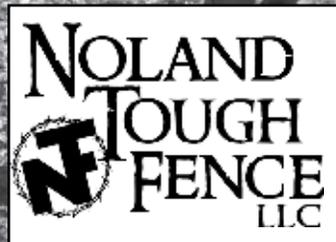
Table 3 represents what the result of our planning exercise might look like. The grey columns define the overall drought or moisture conditions and the blue columns contain local indicators. The green column contains site specific experience or the "trigger" that determines the management decision in the pink column. Our culling priority groups and herd increase alternatives have been placed in their respective categories. The "notes" portion is arguably the most important. Here you would record what decision was actually made, why you did or did not follow the pre-determined course, and what different or better information would have helped in each situation. Remember when I said earlier that articulating and recording that personal experience you've gained over the years is important? Here is why.

Legacy of Information

First, a lot of you in the ranching business learned a lot of what you know the hard way. On the job. Trial and error. Working alongside parents or grandparents. Unfortunately, if you get "hit by a bus" as the saying goes, often that information is lost. Second, the next generation of ranchers and



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...and as for you, brothers never tire of doing what is right... 2 Thes 3:13

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