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## **Drought Monitor Map Presents Grim Missouri Report; Farmers Encouraged to Report Local Conditions**

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**SPRINGFIELD, Mo. - Drought has put its grip on most of Missouri and the state's cattle producers are having to make decisions to handle rapidly dwindling amounts of forage for their cattle.**

The U.S. Drought Monitor map released Thursday showed the 68.75 percent of the state with some drought rating. Severe drought or worse appeared in 17.2 percent of the state.

See: <http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/CurrentMap/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?MO>

According to the drought monitor, Barry County is in a D1, or moderate drought, but experts say it is likely worse in many places, partly because the rain has been so spotty.

"Sometimes the precipitation rain fall data points are not quite enough to grasp the severity that we are actually feeling boots on the ground here in Barry County," said Reagan Bluel, a dairy specialist with University of Missouri Extension who is headquartered in Barry County.

Bluel says last year's dry fall and cold spring also caused this drought to create the perfect storm.

"This drought-type condition and the set up to this point is impacting all cattle producers," Bluel said.

In order for cattle producers to receive federal drought assistance, they must be in a D2 drought for eight consecutive weeks, a D3 drought for four consecutive weeks.

Farmers can help report drought conditions that will be factored into the drought monitor by visiting <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/d19575fdb234442087f1ee838bc8b2dc> and/or <https://cocorahs.org/>

### **CALLS AND ADVICE**

"Within the last week, week-and-a-half, I've been getting calls and emails from people looking for hay," Tim Schnakenberg, agronomy specialist with University of Missouri Extension.

Producers will need to make management decisions quickly during drought to maintain enough forage to feed the herd.

"Culling poor performing animals is one choice to reduce the amount of forage needed, but improving pasture management can also be effective," Schnakenberg said. "Producers who plan ahead get themselves into a position to take advantage of better growing conditions when those conditions eventually arrive."

Where pastures still have forage, Schnakenberg recommended protecting any remaining standing forage by shutting pasture gates or by using temporary electric fencing.

"Manage it like standing hay and feed it a few acres at a time to make it last as long as possible," said Schnakenberg.

## **OTHER PRACTICES**

**Other practices for managing during drought:**

- \* **Rotational grazing is a good drought management tool. Rotational grazing helps maintain forage growth longer into a drought period than continuous grazing.**
- \* **Although all forages produce yield less during drought, some species including bermudagrass and KY-31 tall fescue, can tolerate heavy grazing and still survive.**
- \* **Feeding hay and limit grazing during dry weather can stretch available forage on drought-stressed pastures.**
- \* **Where pastures are grazed down to the soil and ranchers are feeding hay, "management strategies must focus on drought recovery."**

## **MORE INFORMATION**

**For more information, contact any of these MU Extension agronomy specialists in southwest Missouri: Tim Schnakenberg in Stone County, (417) 357-6812; Jill Scheidt in Barton County, (417) 682-3579 and Sarah Kenyon in Howell County, (417) 256-2391.**

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**Source: Reagan Bluel, (417) 847-3161**



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