

Agweather Connection

<http://agweather.mesonet.org/>

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Beef: from pasture to plate

Raising cattle is a way of life in Oklahoma. Across the state, more than 5 million cattle dot the rolling prairies.

Those 5 million-plus cattle eat various meals in order to gain muscle and fat for harvesting. Their meals usually consist of grass, hay, grain or range cubes, which contain grain by-products and roughage. These feeds are almost always affected by the weather.

In 2006, drought plagued the state sucking water out of barren soil, shriveling crops and draining the pocketbooks of farmers and ranchers. More than 60 percent of Oklahoma's hay stock was damaged in 2006.

Winter wheat, on which many producers graze their cattle in winter, also was damaged by the drought.

As grazing became scarce, other feed prices continued to rise. These rising prices caused many ranchers to sell cattle. These liquidated cattle helped lower cattle and meat prices. Not only are cattle markets and prices affected during a drought but the liquidation of herds in a drought often has impacts on cattle markets for months and even years after the drought.

This cause-and-effect scenario had wide-reaching impacts on crops, cattle, farmers, ranchers, consumers and towns supported by agriculture.

As if an imaginary switch was flipped between 2006 and 2007, the drought

has receded and many Oklahomans are seeing close-to-average or above average rainfall. Most wheat fields are lush and green, alfalfa fields are ready for their second cutting and ponds are nearly full. Cattle are grazing on fresh grass as they begin to gain weight and thicken for harvest.

A group of American beef producers has developed a brochure that walks you through the stages of beef production. To learn more, [click here](#). ■

Weathering the weather

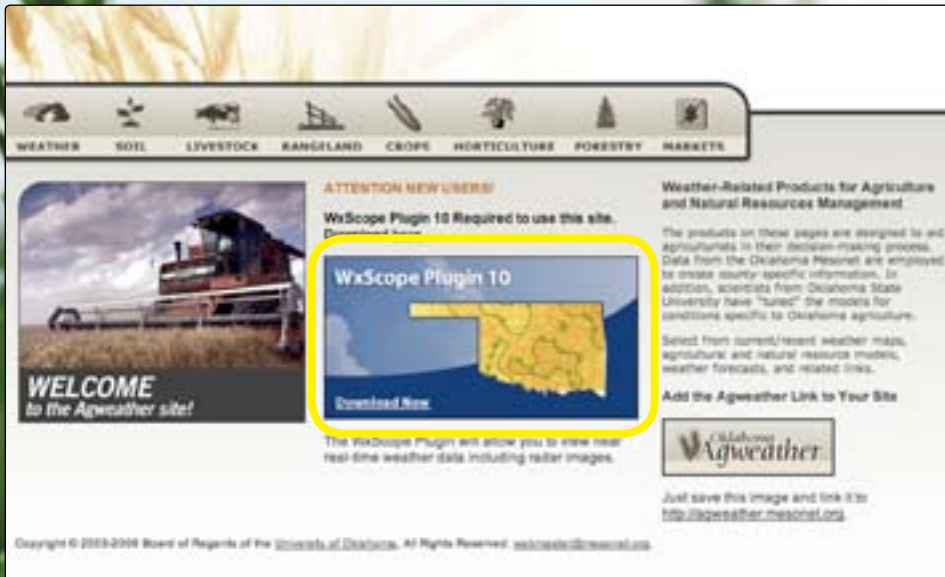
By Laura K. McKay

It's a fact. Weather drives agriculture. The typical cycles of weather and livestock prices have made cattle ranching a challenge. By monitoring the weather, cattlemen can know what weather is headed their way and can plan actions that are necessary to remain profitable.

Oklahoma's cattle ranchers can utilize several tools on the free Agweather site at <http://agweather.mesonet.org/>.

The Agweather Web site features data from the Oklahoma Mesonet, a statewide weather network supported by OSU and OU.

To help you get started, step-by-step directions are listed below. If you have any questions or need more information, call (405) 325-3126 or send e-mail to laura.k.mckay@okstate.edu or albert.sutherland@okstate.edu.



Free download

Start at <http://agweather.mesonet.org/>. Be sure to download the WxScope Plugin. It's safe and free, and allows you to view all of the resources that Agweather offers.

If your Internet connection is slow, we can send you a free CD that will allow you to download the WxScope Plugin more quickly. Call (405) 325-3126 to request a CD.

[Click here for the Windows software.](#)

[Click here for the Macintosh software.](#)



Cattle stress

From the home page located at <http://agweather.mesonet.org/>, select the "Livestock" icon. Then choose "Beef Cattle," then "Cattle Stress Model" and finally choose "Cattle Stress Maps." You can then choose to look at current cattle stress conditions or forecasted stress conditions.

Oklahoma's extreme weather can have a dramatic impact on livestock. Extreme conditions can alter feed intake, reduce daily weight gain or increase feed requirements. To learn more about preventing cattle stress, [click here](#).

Livestock markets

From the Agweather home page at <http://agweather.mesonet.org/>, pick the "Markets" button. Then select "Livestock," then "OSU Livestock Marketing" and finally choose "Market Info" from the top center part of the site. Then, choose the desired auction.

These pages report the number of cattle sold, their weight and average price.

Stockman's Livestock Inc.
Apache, Oklahoma
Friday and Saturday Auction 03/24-25/2007

Receipts: 2463 Last Week: 3917 Last year: 2334
Head count includes 130 head of video cattle

Compared to last week: Feeder steers steady to 2.00 lower. Feeder heifers steady. 400-700 pound heifers 1.00-2.00 higher. Steer calves 2.00 higher. Heifer calves 1.00-2.00 lower. Demand good moderate to good for feeder cattle. Demand good for grazing cattle. Supply consisted of 42 percent steers, 54 percent heifers, 2 percent bulls, and 79 percent over 600 lbs.

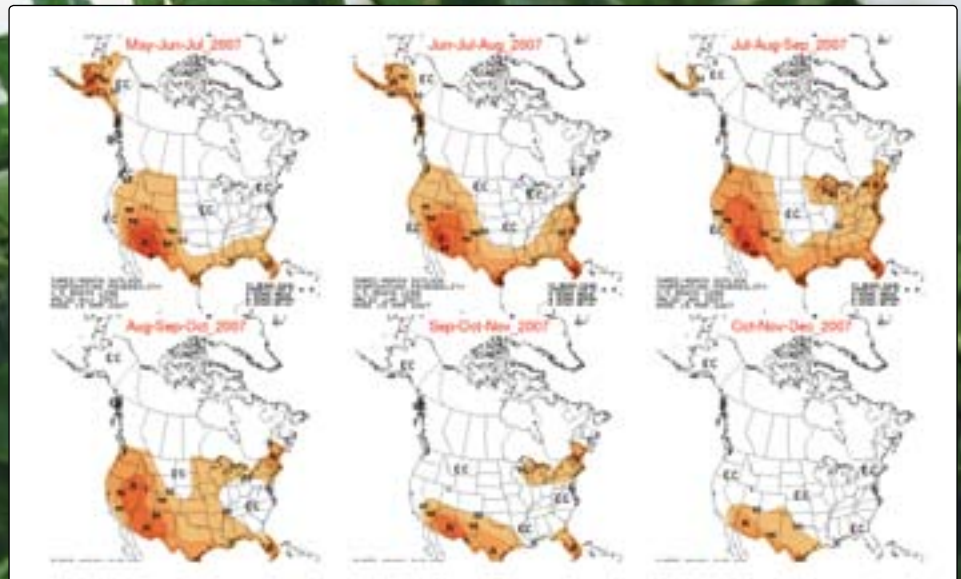
Slaughter cows to 3.00 4.00 lower. Slaughter bulls 2.00-3.00 lower. Total of 425 cows and bulls sold with 40 percent to packers.

Feeder Steers Medium and Large 1					
Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price	
18	458-677	469	121.50-136.00	127.80	
11	548	548	123.50	123.50	
29	554-587	575	113.50-123.50	116.40	
57	604-634	614	113.50-118.00	116.25	
44	631-664	657	110.25-113.00	111.60	
58	701-748	721	105.00-110.00	108.07	
38	758-788	767	103.50-109.00	107.30	
124	803-844	819	100.00-103.00	101.88	
4	859	859	99.25	99.25	
18	904-921	913	93.25-96.25	94.78	

Extended forecasts

From the Agweather home at <http://agweather.mesonet.org/>, pick the "Weather" button. Then select "Forecasts" and then "Extended Forecasts." You can look at "Temperature beyond 90 days" or "Precipitation beyond 90 days."

These forecasts are for about a year into the future and can give producers insight into how much hay or supplemental feed might be needed over the coming winter. "A" means above average, "B" means below average and "EC" means equal chance of "A" or "B".



Growing season rain

From the Agweather home page at <http://agweather.mesonet.org/>, pick the "Weather" button. Then select "Monthly and Climate," then "Oklahoma Climate Data," and "Rainfall and Drought Update" Select "Warm Growing Season" from the middle of the top horizontal menu bar. Scroll down to the bottom of the page. You will see "Rainfall Stats" maps.

These maps can give cattle producers an idea of how rapidly ponds will dry or how quickly pastures will die off due to lack of rainfall.

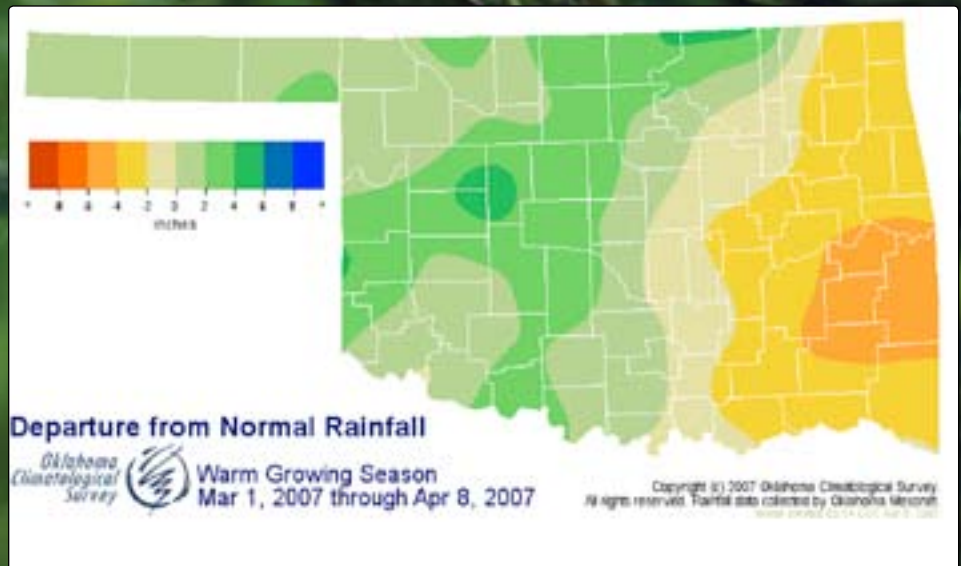




photo by sarah casha

Feed and food

By Dr. Gretchen Hilton
OSU Assistant Professor of Meat Science

Meat quality, which is important for flavor and cost, can be impacted by what cattle eat.

Most cattle processed in the U.S. are fed a grain-based diet for 100-plus days prior to harvest. This diet is very important to meat quality. Cattle not fed a grain-based diet or those just grass fed prior to harvest have very different final eating quality when compared to those grain fed.

Cattle fed grain will typically have a higher degree of marbling, whiter external fat and a more desirable flavor than grass-fed cattle. Grain feeding is very important to improvement of quality grade. With the tremendous economic impacts gained by producing USDA Choice carcasses, grain feeding is critical to the profitability of the cattle feeding industry.

By feeding cattle grain for an extended period of time (greater than 45 days), fat is whiter when compared to grass-fed cattle. Fat color is an important aspect of consumer purchase decisions because of consumer appeal and acceptability.

Consumers in the US are very accustomed to grain-fed beef and most often consider grass-fed beef to have an objectionable flavor and, in a sense, “taste like grass.” However, consumers in countries like Australia eat grass-fed beef so they prefer that beef over grain-fed beef.

It is clearly a consumer preference by region of the world whether they prefer grain-fed or grass-fed beef. In the U.S., type of diet is very important to finally beef quality and consumer acceptability. ■

Agweather
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Agweather is a product of the
Oklahoma Mesonet.
<http://agweather.mesonet.org/>

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