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News from Your Extension Agent:

So, we're in a drought. What does that mean? According to drought.gov abnormal dryness is affecting over 16 million people in Texas, about 67% of the state's population. As of last Thursday, August 14, Camp County is in drought condition D2. This is the beginning of what is considered a "severe drought." There are many things homeowners, livestock producers and the general public can do to get through these conditions. The choices you make will determine how detrimental these drought conditions are to you and those around you.

Basics: Conserve water. Make sure there are other sources available for your home. Well water is an excellent option. Just make sure the pump is in proper working order and not turning on and off repeatedly. If it is, turn it off and give it a chance to rest until the water table can rise.

Lawn care: Conserve water. Make sure irrigation pipes and systems are in good working order and do not have leaks. Turn off automatic sprinkler settings. Irrigate based on plant stress, rather than on a daily basis. **DO NOT WATER IN THE HEAT OF THE DAY.** Save watering for after 7pm or before 9am. Fewer but heavier lawn watering encourages deeper roots that withstand dry weather better. A deeply watered lawn should be able to withstand approximately 5 days between waterings. Mow more frequently and raise mower height- this is to avoid cutting more than 1/3 of the leaf blade (to help with long term health and re-growth). **Mulching:** mulch conserves moisture by reducing evaporation of water vapor from the soil surface. This reduces water requirements.

Livestock: Conserve water: don't let water troughs over flow. Dry cows need about 8-10 gallons of water daily, cows in the last 3 months of gestation may drink up to 15 gallons. As forage declines, consider feeding corn or other feedstuffs to stretch hay supplies. Maintain 50% of the diet as roughage under all circumstances. Don't be afraid to decrease stocking rate and cull cows. Do be cautious of buying hay from unknown producers/dealers. Drought-stressed corn or sorghum stalks (which people often roll as hay during drought) can be high in nitrates and may be toxic to cattle. Producers should always discuss hay quality before purchasing hay from unknown producers/dealers. However, this can be difficult when hay is sparse, so again, consider other feedstuffs.

Forage and other crops: Conserve water- consider rain water harvesting. Drought-stressed pastures do not recover as quickly. Pastures need rest in order to recover. Over-grazing and trampling from hooves both suppress regrowth. A rotational grazing system can do wonders for forage quality. If crops are under an irrigation system, make sure pumps, nozzles, hoses are in working order, free of leaks, blocks, etc. It is important to check the soil for moisture, do not over-water in these conditions.



Management and maintenance are key. In the coming weeks I will be going in to further details on each section above. For instance, which cows do I cull first? What about rainwater harvesting? Algae in ponds. Irrigation efficiency.

#AgFact wildlife are affected by the drought too.

All data and recommendations are based on Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Resources and the U.S. Drought Monitor.

Sincerely,

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