

Planning for Droughts

Written by Julie Elliott, NRCS rangeland management specialist



Earlier I said grazers need to walk each of their pastures to determine how good the range might be this year. Since acres do not feed cows—only grass feeds cows—we need to determine how much grass is out there.

You should take a yardstick and a camera or cell phone to take pictures of the yardstick both standing up and lying on the ground. When on the range, you need to look down, not across, to see how much and what kinds of grasses are out there.

The abundance of dead grass plants, bare ground and litter are also important to notice and document. Dead grasses have a black or dark grey color in winter and summer. Dead grasses are not going to grow, no matter how much water you pour on them. The more litter cover we have, the less bare ground we have and the faster our range will recover.

While 2013 was the best fall in a few years, it did not undo the substantial root losses from the two (or more) previous summers. The grasses that were dead are still dead. The plants that had short roots are still short on roots.

To read the full article, subscribe to our e-Edition. Call 970-854-2811.

(This article is the fourth in a six-part series adapted from a presentation given on Jan. 9 in Garden City, Kan., on “Planning for Extreme and Extended Drought on the Farm and Ranch.” To watch and listen to this presentation and others on the weather outlook and drought go to: <http://drought.unl.edu/ranchplan/Overview/Resources/ExtendedExtremeDroughtWorkshop.aspx> .)

Holyoke Enterprise April 24, 2014