

# BeefTalk: One Size Does Not Fit All

**We have the makings of being a little drier than dry.**

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist

NDSU Extension Service

Dry weather has dominated recent conversations. We can only hope the weather forecast indicating rain is true.

If dry weather continues, one should have a plan to follow. Unfortunately, a lack of rain is not new. For many ranchers, dry conditions have forced producers to reduce cattle numbers in previous years as well.

For all practical matters, herd reduction plans have been carried out. Most of the old and late-calving cows are gone. Those cows that were open also were culled last fall. There is not much excess to cull.

Agriculture never has been easy. The founding mission of the Dickinson Research Extension Center in 1905 says: "The Center shall conduct research on increasing the carrying capacity of native rangeland, with emphasis on conservation and preservation for future generations ... on grass production to determine how to best compensate for the vagaries of the weather ... in the dry-land agriculture .... with beef cattle ... for the benefit of livestock producers ... (and) by the identification of adapted crop species ... and development of profitable cropping systems that achieve the necessary balance between profitability and conservation of all natural resources... ."

Current issues are not new. Those concerns are the same concerns today and show that not as much progress has been made as we sometimes think or, perhaps, the magnitude of the questions were underestimated.

The "vagaries of the weather" is a key phrase in the center's mission. Within Microsoft Word, the definition of vagaries is an unpredictable or eccentric change, action or idea.

In Webster's Dictionary, the definition is very similar. It is defined as an erratic, unpredictable or extravagant manifestation, action or notion. When one places the term in front of weather, it leaves little to ponder.

Weather defies prediction and, while weather reports are quite accurate, weather itself is determined by factors unknown, but if known, not readily controlled by us. In addition, the extravagant manifestation of an eccentric action would fit as well.

The daily reports of weather-related crises are expected and bad weather versus good weather is a daily struggle.

The other phrase that stands out is "dryland agriculture."

Most producers already know, even with a short memory, in what environment they are trying to run their cattle operation. At least for the center, it is dryland.

The sale of overshoes, boot rubbers or other waterproof attire in western North Dakota is limited and for

## Images



Put the right piece in the right puzzle

much of the upper Great Plains and the west, dryland is just that, dry. So, maybe this year is not that different. We have the makings of being a little drier than dry.

Regardless, a plan still is needed for those years when one has the makings of being a little drier than dry. So that brings me to the last word that should be highlighted in the mission of the center. That word is "adapted." One size does not fit all.

If there is a hidden message within the mission, ultimately, the center's mission is truly an exercise in fitting the pieces of the puzzle into the right puzzle. We know the puzzle. We just have to find the right pieces.

The same is true for many producers. We spend most of our lives trying to get the pieces to fit, which simply is the way it is. The challenge for those who seem to struggle more is that they have not realized what puzzle they are working with. Fitting the pieces in the wrong puzzle gets you nowhere.

This is dry country. Next time we will visit more on how the pieces fit and how adaptability is a key component, not only for beef, but for all animals and plants as well.

If one thinks this is wet country, one should look up some other ZIP code.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>.

For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

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**Source:** Kris Ringwall, (701) 483-2348, ext. 103, [kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu](mailto:kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu)

**Editor:** Rich Mattern, (701) 231-6136, [richard.mattern@ndsu.edu](mailto:richard.mattern@ndsu.edu)

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