

Recovery Takes Time

Give stands the time to rebuild and track the progress.

After Drought:

- Address erosion, compaction, or system damage
- Avoid stressing fields to quickly
- Reseed only where recovery is unlikely
- Track your costs, feed changes, and impacts
- Track your system repairs and problem areas

Financial Assistance May Be Available

Start with JSWCD for local guidance and referrals:

- **JSWCD:** non-regularity guidance and referrals
- **OWRD / Jackson County District 13 Watermaster:** water rights, drought tools, and water supply questions and strategy
- **Farm Service Agency (FSA):** disaster assistance programs, eligibility, notice of loss, and application steps
- **NRCS / OSU Extension:** grazing, pasture, livestock, irrigation and support

If drought affects your livestock water, feed, or grazing, contact your local FSA office early. Programs may help eligible producers with certain drought-related losses.

Possible pathways:

- **ELAP — Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program:** May help eligible producers with certain drought-related costs, such as hauling water, hauling feed, or moving livestock to forage. Producers must file a notice of loss and application through their local FSA office.
- **LFP — Livestock Forage Disaster Program:** Provides financial support to eligible livestock producers who experience grazing losses due to qualifying drought conditions or fire on federally managed rangeland
- **FSA programs:** may apply depending on the loss, location, and program year.

Keep Records

Document dates, receipts, gallons hauled, feed/livestock transportation costs, pasture conditions, photos, and communication with agencies. Eligibility, deadlines, and required records depend on the loss, location, and program year.



Scan Me to check out the WaterWise Guides to find tips and resources that fit your home, land, livestock, or business needs.

jswcd.org/waterwise-drought-guides



Stay Informed.
Get seasonally relevant, local updates about upcoming events, funding opportunities, programs, and resources.

Drought Preparedness



WATERWise
Where Every Drop Matters

for Hay & Pastures

**Protect Your Fields.
Prioritize Your Water.
Plan Ahead.**



Start Before Water Is Short

During drought, water and cutting decisions are tied together. Limited water, heat, and uneven irrigation can affect yield, stand health, soil cover, weed pressure, and how well a field comes back next season.

Define your Goals and Priorities

In a drought year, limited water may not support every field, cutting, or production goal. Decide early whether your priority is yield, feed supply, stand survival, soil cover, or recovery for next season — then use that priority to guide where water goes first.

Prioritize and focus on high producing fields, and avoid spending limited water where it is unlikely to pay back in forage production or stand health.

A smaller crop may be the better drought decision if it protects your field for next year. Protect the roots, crowns, and soil over before pushing for a low return, last cutting

Confirm Your Water Sources

Before making cutting or irrigation decisions, talk with your irrigation district, ditch manager, or watermaster about water availability, delivery timing, and any limits on changing how or where water is used.

If you rely on shared or district water:

- Follow rotation schedules and coordinate early
- Communicate delivery issues quickly
- Notify managers if you finish early
- Confirm rules before changing use

If you rely on private sources:

- Watch for declining flow or slower recovery
- Track changes early
- Know your backup plan if supply drops

During Drought: Make Every Drop Count

Walk Your Fields

Use field walks to decide where water will make a difference

— and where it won't.

- Which fields are still productive and responsive
- Which areas are declining, uneven, choked with weeds, or unlikely to recover
- Where irrigation is soaking in to reach the root zone — and where it is not
- Where conditions suggest rest may be more valuable than more water

Look closely at plant condition:

- Active regrowth vs. stalled growth
- Signs of stress vs. recovery potential
- Rooted plants vs. thinning stands

Dormant does not always mean dead

During hot, dry conditions, some forage may slow down or go dormant. Dormant forage may look dry or inactive, but that does not always mean the stand is dead. Look for green tissue near the plant base, plants that are still rooted, and regrowth after irrigation or cooler weather before assuming a stand has failed. At the same time, avoid pushing drought-stressed fields too hard. A stressed stand may need rest, not another cutting.

Sprinkler Irrigation Tips

Sprinkler irrigation works well during drought because it can improve yield with less water compared to other forms of irrigation.

- 1 to 2 inches of water every week.
- Irrigate deeply at night or early mornings to prevent evaporation.
- Repair leaking gaskets, pipes and fittings.
- Check pumps low water shutoff switch

Flood Irrigation Tips

Flood irrigation is common, but drought makes timing and control even more important.

- Repair ditches / places where water escapes before reaching the field
- Watch how water moves across the field and adjust flow, boards, or timing as needed.
- Match timing to the field need, recently cut hay may not use water the same way.



Leaving enough plant height helps protect the plant base, shade the soil, support roots, and improve recovery when moisture returns.



Plan for Fewer Cuttings and/or Less Grazing

In drought, the goal may shift from maximizing yield to protecting the stand, soil, and next season's production.

- Do a spring cutting in mid-june and don't do a late cutting in drought years.
- Avoid taking a weak late cutting too low.
- Reduce your herd to reduce pressure on forage fields.

Match water to the cutting you can support

Recently cut forage uses less water while regrowth is short. Demand increases as the canopy fills back in and plants are actively growing.

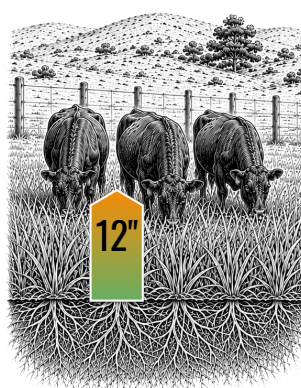
- Irrigate where water can support a realistic cutting.
- Prioritize fields with active regrowth and good stand condition.
- Avoid using limited water on fields unlikely to produce enough return.
- Watch whether regrowth responds before committing more water.
- Be realistic about whether another cutting is worth it.
- Consider stand protection and soil cover when yield potential is low.

Leave enough plant height for survival and recovery

Cutting or grazing too short can make drought stress worse.

- Deeper roots are better at drought resilience for next season.
- Leaving enough plant height helps protect the plant base, shade the soil, support roots, and improve recovery when moisture returns.
- Rest stressed fields when possible. (bare soil, weeds, and slow regrowth)
- For grazed fields, the "in at 12 inches, out at 6 inches during drought, and out at 4 inches in normal water years" concept can help prevent overgrazing and support pasture recovery.

GRAZE IN AT 12 INCHES



DURING DROUGHT,
MOVE OUT AT 6 INCHES



IN NORMAL YEARS,
MOVE OUT AT 4 INCHES

