Reduce Winter Feeding with Stockpiled Forage and Winter Pasture

Friday, August 22, 2025

Online Program: Watch from Home

Would you prefer to feed hay for 60 days? 100 days? or 150 days?
Here's an opportunity to learn how to significantly reduce your hay feeding needs.

Stockpiled forages and winter pasture can be excellent options to significantly reduce winter feeding costs and develop replacement heifers.

Program presented by:
Drs. Vanessa Corriher-Olson and Jason Banta

Topics include:

- Stockpiled forage: management and utilization
- Acres needed per cow for stockpiled forage and winter pasture
- Cool-season forages and variety selection
- Establishment and fertilization
- Monthly and seasonal forage production potential
- Appropriate mineral supplementation
- Estimated costs

Register by August 21st at 3:00 PM: $45/person

- Electronic copies of slides and other program materials will be available prior to the program
- All sessions will be recorded and available for later viewing for those that register

The program will be divided into 3 sessions to allow attendees to have a break between sessions
8:30 – 10:30 AM Part 1
12:00 – 2:00 PM Part 2
3:30 – 5:30 PM Part 3

Register online at: https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/ansc-ev-081
or go agriliferegister.tamu.edu and search by location "Overton"

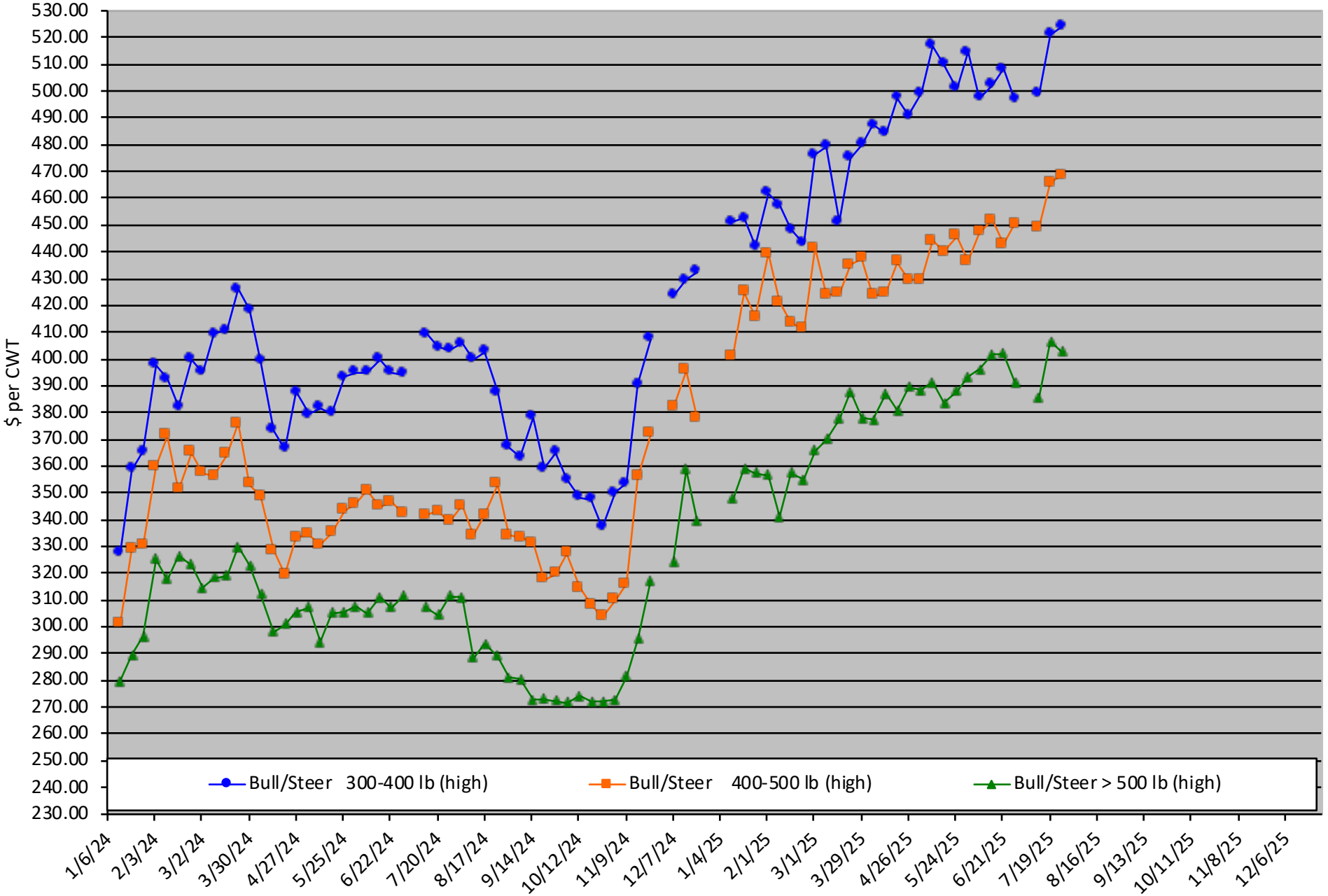
For more information on this program please contact Michelle Sensing @ 903-847-0611.

Calf Price Trends

Trend of the Highest Price Reported for Various Weight Calves, Average of 6 East & Central Texas Livestock Auctions

Chart created by Dr. Jason Banta, Extension Beef Cattle Specialist

For a weekly email copy of this chart please email amsensing@ag.tamu.edu or contact a Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent

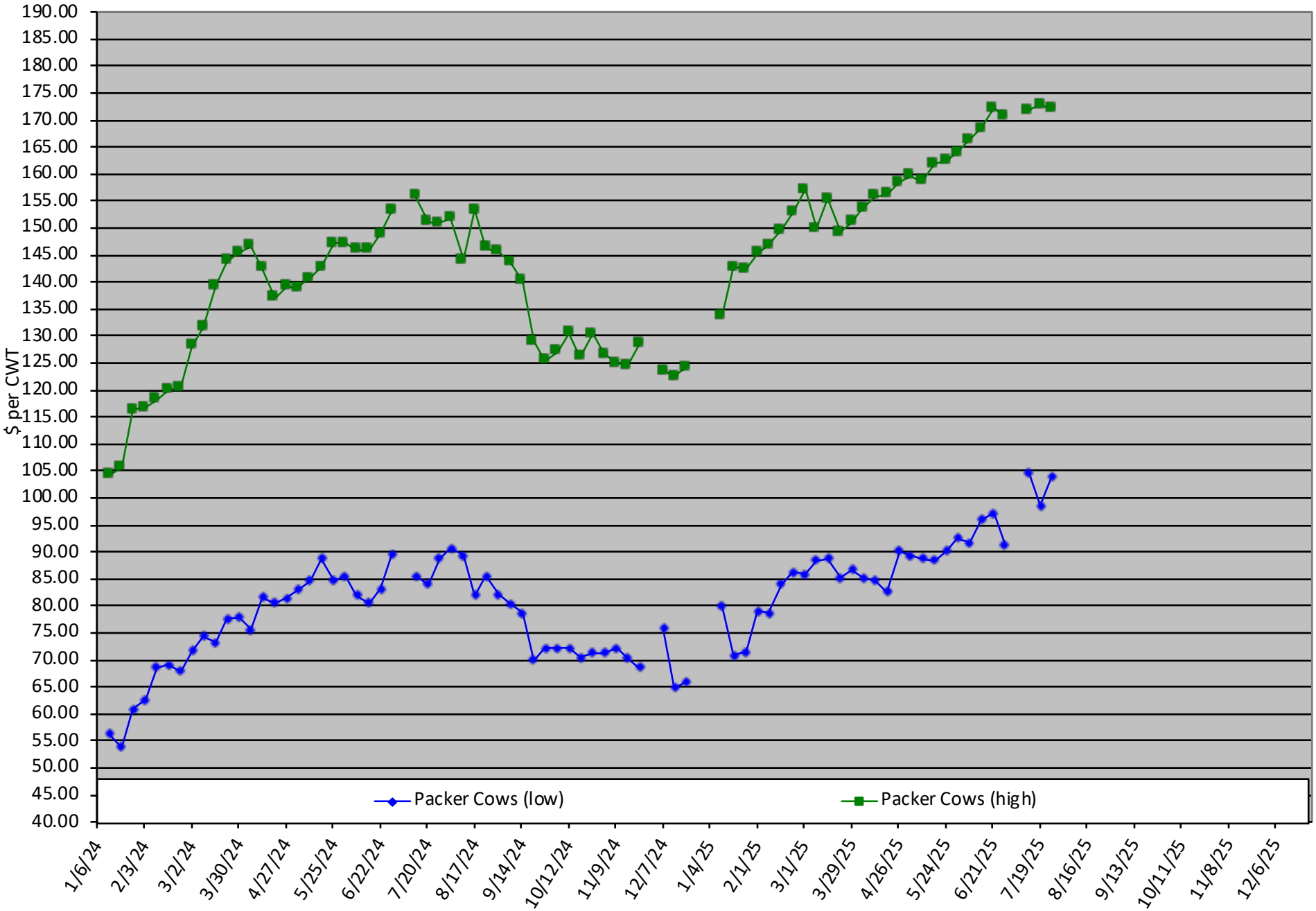


Packer Cow PriceTrends

Trend of High and Low Prices Reported for Packer Cows, Average of 6 East & Central Texas Livestock Auctions

Chart created by Dr. Jason Banta, Extension Beef Cattle Specialist

For a weekly email copy of this chart please email amsensing@ag.tamu.edu or contact a Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent



AG IN THE EVENING

2025 virtual Zoom Educational Series programs brought to you by the Extension offices of Houston & Gregg Counties

MAY 13, 2025

DR. JASON BANTA

BODY CONDITION SCORE & BASIC REPRODUCTION IN CATTLE

JUNE 10, 2025

DR. VANESSA CORRIHER OLSON

BERMUDA GRASS CHALLENGES IN PASTURES & HAY MEADOWS

JULY 8, 2025

DR. JASON BANTA

HYDROGEN CYANIDE & NITRATES IN BEEF CATTLE

AUG 12, 2025

DR. VANESSA CORRIHER OLSON

ALFALFA: TO GROW OR NOT TO GROW?

AG IN THE EVENING

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Click TITLE of each program or scan QR Code to register

ALL PROGRAMS START AT 6:00 PM

Meet Their Needs

Heavy spring rains impact hay quality.

by Jason Banta, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Heavy rains this spring created many challenges for cattle producers. One challenge that will have to be managed this winter is low hay quality. The rains prevented producers from getting in the fields and cutting hay in a timely manner, so many cut what should have been the first and second cutting at the same time.

When evaluating hay for beef cattle, many factors should be considered including energy content, crude protein concentration, mineral levels and palatability, just to name a few. Energy content can be described with many different terms, but TDN or total digestible nutrients is the one most commonly used in beef cow-calf operations. Adequate amounts of TDN and crude protein are critical to ensure cows perform well and come through the winter in good condition. So it is important to understand how various agronomic and environmental factors affect TDN and crude protein concentrations in hay (Table 1).

One of the biggest factors affecting forage quality is plant maturity. As plants increase in maturity, lignin and fiber (plant structural components) concentrations increase and forage digestibility decreases. This results in both a decrease in TDN and crude protein concentration. To optimize both forage quality and forage yield, it is commonly recommended that forages such as bermudagrass and bahiagrass be harvested every three to five weeks.

Lignin is the single most important factor affecting forage digestibility, and as temperatures increase, lignin deposition increases in grasses like bermudagrass and bahiagrass. Consequently for these grasses, hay harvested in the spring and fall will typically have a higher TDN concentration than hay harvested during mid-summer.

Nitrogen leaching was a problem in many areas with heavy rains. Additionally, the heavy rains prevented many producers from even being able to fertilize their fields. A lack of nitrogen results in decreased forage yield and crude protein concentrations.

If hay is rained on after cutting but before baling, protein is increased but TDN is decreased. This happens because some of the soluble carbohydrates and minerals are washed out of the hay, thereby increasing the concentration of the remaining components such as crude protein.

Table 1. Typical effect of various agronomic and environmental factors on crude protein and TDN concentration in hay

Agronomic or Environmental Factor	% crude protein	% TDN
increased plant maturity	decrease	decrease
increased temperature during growth of warm season grasses	minimal effect	decrease
increased amount of nitrogen fertilizer	increase	minimal effect
hay rained on after cutting but before baling	increase	decrease

Table 2. Estimated crude protein and TDN requirements of Brahman-influenced cows at various stages of production under typical conditions

Cow Stage of Production	CP, % of dry matter	TDN, % of dry matter
2-yr-old lactating cow	11	62
3-yr-old lactating cow	11.5	63
mature lactating cow, 25 lbs of milk	11.5	63
3-yr-old dry cow, 270 d pregnant	9	58
mature dry cow, 270 d pregnant	8	55

Hay testing is important to determine how much impact these factors had on forage quality. A good practice is to sample approximately 10 percent of the bales from a particular cutting or load using a hay probe. Samples should be taken from bales that would represent hay from the entire field or if the hay is already stacked from bales randomly throughout the stack.

After taking samples from 10 percent of the bales, combine the samples to create a composite for analysis. For example, if you made three cuttings of hay, you would want to develop a composite for each cutting and then send those three composites to the lab.

Crude protein content is the most common thing people think about when testing hay. While the crude protein content is important, a good estimate of TDN is as important and in many cases more important than crude protein. This is especially true for bermudagrass and bahiagrass.

Crude protein can be measured directly and the procedures for doing this are fairly consistent across labs. TDN, however, can't be measured directly and the methods for estimating the TDN of forages vary considerably from lab to lab. Some labs do a very good job, while others unfortunately do not.

It is critical to get a good estimate of TDN so that cows can be supplemented appropriately and economically to achieve the desired body condition coming out of the hay-feeding season. If you are working with a nutritionist, find out what lab(s) they prefer to use before submitting samples. Dairy One Forage Lab in Ithaca, N.Y., and Cumberland Valley Analytical Services in Hagerstown, Md., are examples of two labs that many beef cattle, dairy cattle and equine nutritionists prefer.

Unfortunately, a lot of the hay that has been analyzed this year has been testing in the high 40s and low 50s for TDN. This type of hay won't even meet the energy requirements of dry cows in late gestation (Table 2). So appropriate energy and protein supplementation this winter will be needed to ensure cows stay in appropriate body condition to breed back. With current calf prices the added expense of appropriate supplementation based off a good hay test will quickly pay off with more and bigger calves to sell next year.

For additional information on forage testing and cattle supplementation, contact your local beef cattle or livestock specialist or a ruminant nutritionist.