

## LIVESTOCK

### Producer's perspective: Is it time to restock?

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**It is amazing** how fast the landscape can change with rain, especially after a drought. Cattle producers are just as resilient. Spring 2013 rains have resulted

in green pastures for many and the question on everyone's mind – is it time to restock? This decision is difficult and unique to each operation. Cattlemen from Oklahoma and Texas share their thoughts on this topic.

#### **1 Spring and fall calving herds, Murray County, Okla.**

"We have had to cull about a third of our cows over the past two years. Prior to the rains in late May, we weaned fall-born calves and culled deeper into our fall cow herd. The cool-season grasses did well this spring, but our native grasses have been slow to take off. Hopefully, we are stocked conservatively enough to allow some pastures to rest and recover. We have kept back quite a few replacement heifers that we plan to add back to the herd, but if our grasses don't recover, they will be for sale."

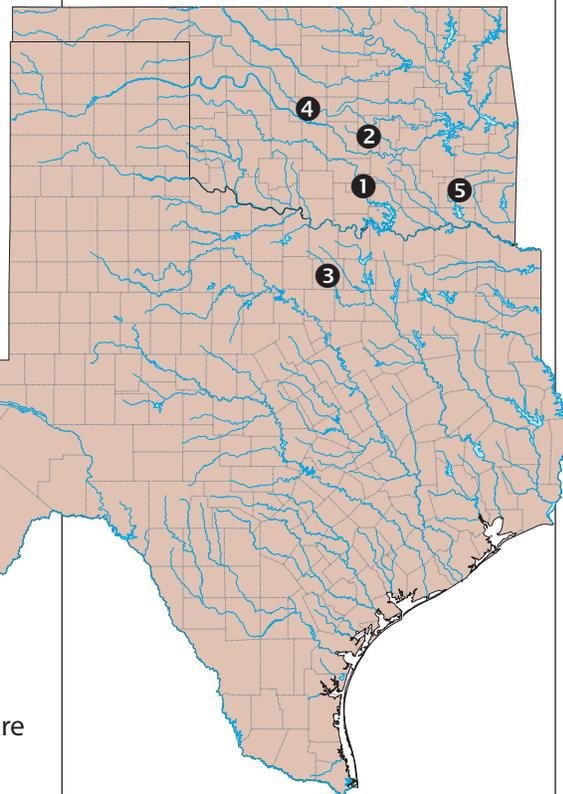
#### **2 Spring and fall calving herds, Pottawatomie County, Okla.**

"We are in the process of purchasing

cows now. We plan to increase our stocking rate to pre-drought levels. Fall and spring rains have all the ponds full, and cool-season annual grasses were abundant. We had to bale some of the excess forage because our stocking rate has been down the last two years. Our bermudagrass was slower than usual to take off because of the late freezes this spring, but has been getting ahead of the cows. We hope it keeps raining, but we'll keep a six-month hay supply just in case it turns dry again."

#### **3 Spring calving herd, Wise County, Texas**

"We are really dry here. Our tanks are very low because we have not had any runoff in a long time. We have had a few small rains, and hopefully it will grow enough grass to get by. We are currently running at about half the normal stocking rate and think we can hold on to them for the rest of this year. If it stays hot and dry, we can always early-wean the calves. Our warm-season grasses really need a growing season of rest so we will not restock until next year at the earliest even if we do catch some rain."



#### **4 Spring and fall calving herds, Canadian County, Okla.**

"I have been able to hold my cow numbers the last two years, but my pastures have paid the price. I have had good moisture this spring, but I don't have as much grass as usual because drought has weakened the stand and I had to graze harder than I wanted to. I am in the process of ▶

culling about 20 percent of my cows, and the majority will come out of the fall herd. I have about three or four months of hay right now which will get me through the winter if we have a normal year. If it turns hot and dry again, I plan to sell out completely. Two years of drought have worn me out, and I don't plan to do it another year."

**5 Spring calving herd,  
Pushmataha County, Okla.**

"I have always stocked conservatively and that has allowed me to get through the drought with very little culling. I am currently running about 85 percent of my normal stocking rate because I have not kept back many replacements the past

two years. I have had good rains this spring and very abundant volunteer ryegrass. I already have the hay I need to get through winter, and it looks like there is enough moisture for my warm-season grasses. I do not plan to add cows this year, but if the grasses recover like I expect, I will increase my numbers in 2014." ■