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Office is currently closed due to COVID and staff are working remotely.

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All articles written by Tom Laca unless otherwise indicated.

Ag Agent Greeting

The dry spring and summer led to many fire concerns as well. Fuel moisture levels in the county were in the single digits most of the summer indicating that if there was an ignition, the fuels would burn easily and spread rapidly. Luckily, here in the county and surrounding areas we managed to get through this with only a handful of relatively small fires. Hats off to the responders and agencies in their quick response to these fires and extra dedication and support of resources to stop these fires before they became large and catastrophic. Northern Colorado was not as lucky this year with three separate fires taking the top spots in terms of acreage burned. Let's all hope and pray that we can get some moisture this winter and into spring and that 2021 will be a better year.



Finally, I want to wish you all well in the future as I will be resigning from Extension. I have truly enjoyed my time serving you here in Pueblo County. It has been a pleasure getting to know you all and assisting you in dealing with issues and questions you have had in the areas of Ag and Natural Resources. I plan on staying in the county and continuing to serve my community just in a different capacity. Those of you who know me know my other passion besides agriculture is emergency response. I have decided to further pursue this passion and dedicate more time and effort into firefighting as a career. Because these two paths I have been on cross over in many ways, I will still be involved in many of the Ag organizations and groups that I have always been.

I have been assured that Extension is already working on filling the position I will be leaving behind. I am confident that you will not be without an Agriculture Agent for long and, in the meantime, those that remain in the office will be able to assist you with your needs. Extension is a great organization that has many resources available to find the answers and research you need. I encourage you to continue to utilize this free resource to help you in improving your business, your stewardship of the land, and your betterment of yourselves. I will miss you all but am looking forward to continuing to serve you just in a different capacity.

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Recent history has taught us several things, disasters will happen, and we need to be prepared when they do. When disasters strike, we have two options: we can panic and try to figure out what we are going to do to survive, or we can institute our well thought out plan that we have prepared for just such an event. It has been my experience that when we have a plan to start from, our response to disaster situations is much smoother, calmer, and more efficient. Without a plan, panic tends to set in and panic and animals do not mix.

When we think about planning for disasters, typically evacuating for a fire is the first thing we think of. There are many other disasters that can hit though that will compromise the health and safety of both you and your animals. Floods, tornadoes, blizzards and drought are just a few of the potential hazards we can face other than fire. When planning for disaster, identify and include those other disaster possibilities for your area in your plan. Some may require evacuation while others mean that you will need to shelter in place. Are you prepared to do either one? What will it take for both you and your animals to survive until help can get to you?

Some disasters may require you to shelter in place. This usually occurs when either there is not enough time to warn you of the impending incident - such as a flash flood or tornado - or when access or egress has been cut off to your location as roads become impassable. In these instances, you will need the items for survival to be where you are. The main things will be, do you have enough food and water to get by until help can get to you? Most often in a disaster one of the first things to go is the power. If power is lost, for many of us that means so does our water supply. Pumps no longer work and indoor plumbing does not happen. Make sure you have 3-5 days' worth of water stored in a place that does not require electricity to distribute. Remember that help is not always going to be able to get to you immediately, and depending on the size of the incident, it may take time before someone can get to you to help. The key to sheltering in place is to always have enough supplies to care for yourself and your animals for at least 3-5 days.

The other disaster response that can be asked of you may be to evacuate. Evacuations tend to take place as disasters evolve and grow. As a disaster, such as fire, grows and is impending on your location, evacuation orders may be implemented in order to allow you and your animals the opportunity to get out of the area and stay safe. The issuance of an evacuation order is not the time to plan or prepare, it is the time to implement the plan that you have already made. The Evacuation order means that it is time to go and the quicker you can get out the better. Sometimes a pre-evacuation order is given which means to be ready because it may not be long before you are asked to leave. For those of you who have multiple animals that may need evacuated and cared for, this pre-evacuation is the time to start the process in order to have the time to get everyone out and safe.



There are some items that we recommend you have available and ready to take with you when the order is issued. For animal owners it is recommended that you have any ownership papers such as registration papers, brand inspections, bill of sales and pictures of your animals for identification purposes. You should also take a three to five-day supply of feed for your animals. Shelter sites during an evacuation often will have feed donated for animals but it is limited to what is given and may not show up

until after the first 24-48 hours. Animals that are on a special diet or used to certain feeds may not get what they need at a shelter if you don't bring it with you. Evacuations are a stressful time for both you and your animals and by keeping your animals with some consistency, such as diet, will help to reduce some of these stresses and keep your animals healthier.

Other items you need to have in your go kit for evacuation would include any medications and first aid supplies for you and your animals. Have these ready to go so that they are not forgotten in the heat of the moment when the evacuation order is given. Any other supplies you may want or need to care for your animals should be ready to go as well. Keeping these items together in a container that is easy to find and grab during an evacuation is key to getting out quickly and efficiently.

Finally, do you have the means to transport your animals to safety? Do you need a pick-up and trailer? Will it take more than one trip? Can you get your animals loaded quickly and easily? This is the one place I have seen where a plan and preparation has helped greatly. When people have a plan and implement that plan, they are often calmer and not as hurried. As we all know, we can't hurry animals and nervous, fast, and rough handling of animals does not work well. When you are calm and controlled, your animals will handle easier and better for you. Make sure that your trailer or other transportation means is in working order and ready to go at all times. Keep tires and lights in good working condition as well as loading and handling facilities for livestock. If your animals haven't been transported recently, practice loading and hauling them to get them accustomed to the process.



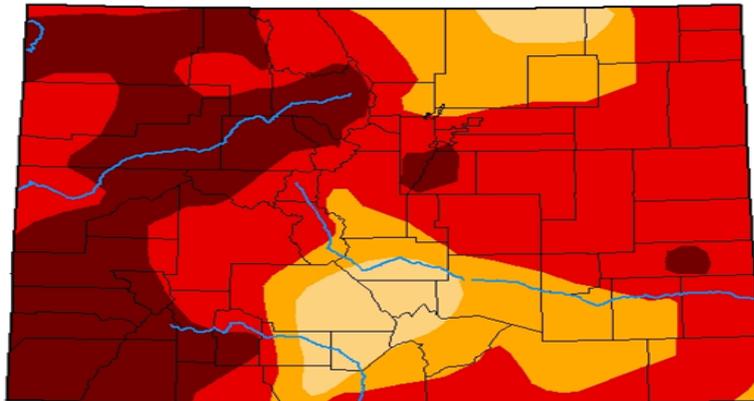
This time of the year is a good time to plan and prepare for evacuations. Be prepared for disasters as they can occur at any time. Fires don't just occur in the mountains as we have seen in the past several years with many happening out on the plains. The current forecasts continue to call for dry weather which just increases our risk for a fire to occur that will require you to evacuate. Best of luck to you and be prepared.



Newsletter Update—If you know of someone who would like to receive our quarterly newsletter, please contact Carolyn at 583-6574 or valdez@pueblocounty.us

U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

December 1, 2020
(Released Thursday, Dec. 3, 2020)
Valid 7 a.m. EST



Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	100.00	93.71	74.68	26.71
Last Week 11-24-2020	0.00	100.00	100.00	93.71	74.63	27.22
3 Months Ago 09-01-2020	0.00	100.00	98.80	91.55	36.85	0.38
Start of Calendar Year 12-31-2019	31.72	68.28	51.19	20.11	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year 09-29-2020	0.00	100.00	99.29	89.35	52.88	2.64
One Year Ago 12-03-2019	28.20	71.80	55.90	30.26	0.00	0.00

Intensity:

- None
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

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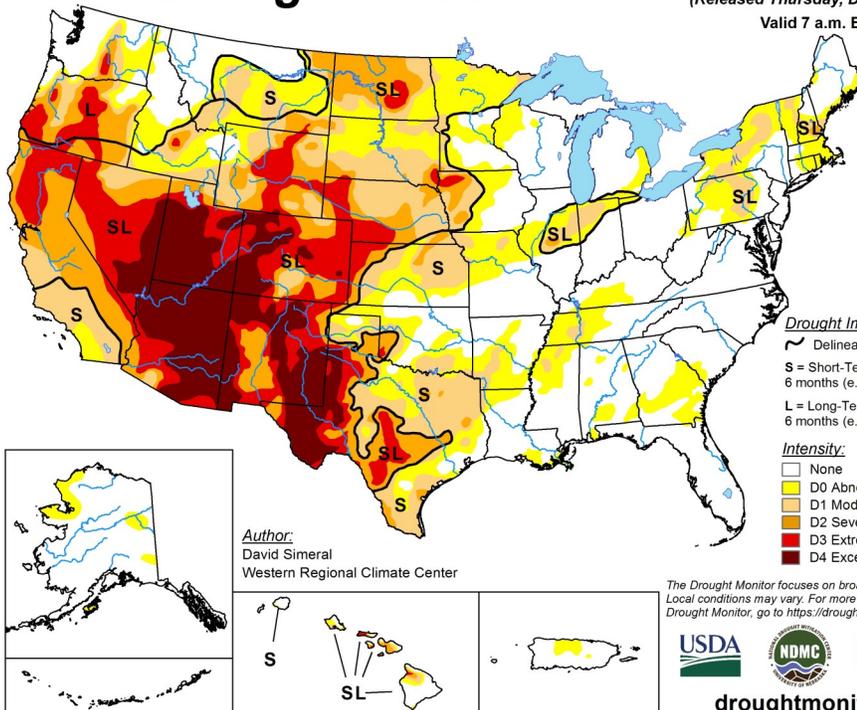
droughtmonitor.unl.edu

For more details and maps go to:

http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/sdo_summary.php

U.S. Drought Monitor

December 8, 2020
(Released Thursday, Dec. 10, 2020)
Valid 7 a.m. EST



This map is updated weekly and can be viewed at

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

From this website, if you are viewing the US map, click on the state of Colorado to view a more detailed map.

Drought Impact Types:

- Delineates dominant impacts
- S** = Short-Term, typically less than 6 months (e.g. agriculture, grasslands)
- L** = Long-Term, typically greater than 6 months (e.g. hydrology, ecology)

Intensity:

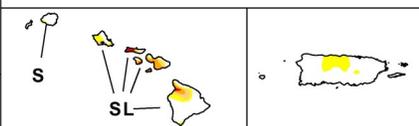
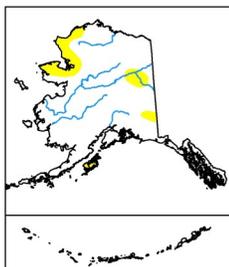
- None
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
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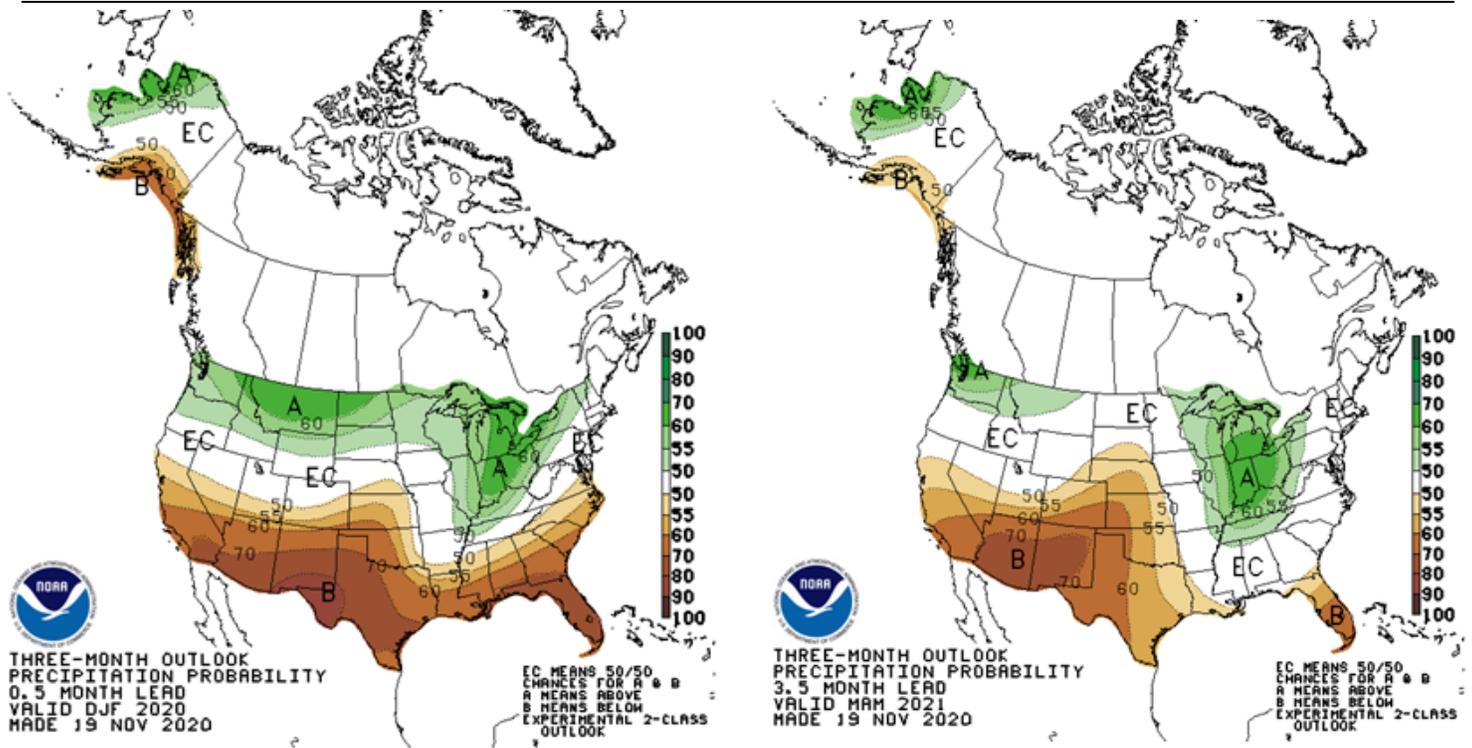
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droughtmonitor.unl.edu

Author:
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Western Regional Climate Center





Narrative

As I said earlier in this newsletter, the drought has taken a firm hold in Colorado. 100% of the state of Colorado is in at least moderate drought with 94% being severe drought or dryer. One light in all of this is that Pueblo County has very little in the extreme category and no exceptional. We are one of the few parts of Colorado that is doing good, if you could call it that. I believe a few of these fall storms we received have been a big help.

The problem is in the next set of maps that I included. These two maps are the long range precipitation forecasts from NOAA Climate Prediction Center. The map on the left is for Dec-Jan-Feb and the map on the right is Mar-Apr-May. These maps indicate that through the winter and spring we should expect below normal probabilities for precipitation. We do not come out of the below normal area until the May-Jun-Jul map and then are still in an equal chance to be above or below normal and this remains throughout the forecast period into 2022.

Let's hope they are wrong and we do get sufficient moisture this winter and spring. Nonetheless, this would be a good time to make drought related plans. Set trigger points for grazing, find alternative feed sources, and plan for the future. The better prepared we are the longer we can weather the drought.

The Basics of a Hay Test

By Michael Fisher, Pueblo County Extension Director

It has been a long and dry year. Many livestock producers in the area have fed up their hay supplies already and are looking at having to purchase hay to feed their livestock over the winter. If you are one of those who are getting ready to purchase hay, have you considered buying hay that has been tested for its nutritional values? There are benefits to knowing what you are purchasing. Below is a “recycled” article that I originally wrote in 2014. It discusses in a basic format what a hay test results can be used for. If you want greater detail, feel free to contact the office and we can discuss some of these elements of a hay test more specifically.



Most of us have used the “Eyeball 2000” at some point to make some assumptions about hay quality. We want to find hay that has a good green color, a high proportion of leaves, dust and mold free, and doesn’t have weeds or foreign objects in it. One can even find conversion charts that will help you turn your visual evaluation into a number value and calculate a rudimentary estimate of “pounds of quality”. If you only have a handful of animals to feed, this may be all of the evaluation you do when purchasing hay. After all, a chemical analysis of forages does require some effort, the appropriate equipment, and has an analysis charge associated with the test. (Typically between \$20 & \$45 per sample for a standard test, depending on what laboratory completes your forage testing.)

When you have a sizeable herd, flock, or band/mob of livestock; a few chemical analysis tests of your forages can quickly pay for themselves. At a minimum, a standard forage test should provide you with estimates of the hay’s dry matter (**DM**), crude protein (**CP**), total digestible nutrients (**TDN**), acid detergent fiber (**ADF**), neutral detergent fiber (**NDF**), and relative feed value (**RFV**). Some labs will provide even more information in their standard package and most labs will have additional tests that can be run for additional charges.

Many producers will key in on the value of CP and TDN for determining how much of the hay they will need to feed to meet their animals’ requirements for protein and energy, respectfully. If you know how much protein and energy your hay possesses it is easier to determine a ration that meets the needs of the livestock and you can determine a feeding cost. A producer can have greater accuracy both nutritionally and economically if they have ADF and NDF values for their feeds. This may be an oversimplification, but think of ADF as a measure of digestibility and NDF as a feed intake value. When I know a hay’s NDF, I can estimate how much of that hay an animal may consume. Additionally, the ADF value can give you an idea of how much of that forage is digestible as opposed to wasted. If you know these two values before purchasing hay, you can use them to make an estimate of how much hay you will need to purchase.

Dry matter values and RFV come into play when you are sourcing hay from multiple locations or cuttings. All forage has some degree of water within it. When you look at a hay analysis report that is in “as-fed”, the water is still in the data and will skew the quality data. A DM analysis shows the data as if all of the water has been removed. This allows you to make comparisons between two or more samples. The RFV is an index number that is designed to give a comparison between two samples. We abuse RFV to a certain extent. It was designed to compare between alfalfa samples but many unfairly infer its use onto other forages.

If you wish to discuss this subject further, you can contact your local Extension office. Here in Pueblo County we have a hay probe that Pueblo County producers may borrow from our Extension office so that they can collect hay samples to send off for analysis. We would be happy to visit with you about the process of hay sampling and/or interpreting the analysis results, should you have questions.