

Amid drought, local ranch is optimistic

Written by Darci Tomky

It's calving season for many cattle operations in northeast Colorado, and the severe drought conditions have ranchers sitting on the edge of their seats.

"We're still optimistic that this drought will lessen," said Gale Haynes. "A lot depends on Mother Nature."

Gale and his wife Cynthia run what they call a ma and pa operation in the rural Holyoke area, and it's evident from talking with them that cattle ranching is their "real love." The Hayneses raise registered Angus for breeding stock as well as commercial Angus for beef.

They have been busy with calving season the past couple months, all the while waiting for some more moisture to come. "We're hoping for rain," said Cynthia, but only time will tell.

Preparing to put the cattle on pasture this summer, they are depending on new grass to grow. If that doesn't happen, the Hayneses already have an alternate plan with extra feed sources.

Gale said there could be a lot of cattle on the market if the drought continues and ranchers don't have alternate feed resources.



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Rounding out their calving season for the year, Gale and Cynthia Haynes are optimistic that one of the worst droughts in Phillips County history will lessen, allowing them to put their Angus cattle on summer pasture this year. —Enterprise photo

“We have so many curve balls thrown at us,” said Gale, with the high price of feed and the uncertainty of the drought this year. “But pricewise, cattle should be good,” he added, noting other places in the country that still have moisture will be willing to pay good prices for cattle.

Consumers at the grocery store could also see an increase in the price of beef, so livestock producers are wondering if they will be willing to pay that price.

Despite the drought, the Hayneses and other livestock producers are very quality-conscious, making sure they raise desirable animals for beef production.

Gale said the number of cattle in the U.S. is the lowest in 60 years, and the drought is slowing down the building back up of the nation’s cowherd.

In the Holyoke area, there are fewer cattle producers now—mostly family operations—but the total amount of cattle being raised has stayed constant.

The Hayneses said the snow they’ve gotten recently has been encouraging, but they continue to hope for more moisture. “This is the worst it’s been,” said Gale of his 42 years in the cattle business. Gale and Cynthia said both their fathers agree that this is the driest they have ever seen Phillips County.

Still, this couple remains optimistic. “You’ve got to have a bad day to appreciate the good day,” said Gale.

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