



## MONTHLY TIP

### March Means Green:

March is the month of greening up! Across Tennessee, pastures are starting to turn green, and although we at UT love orange, green is my favorite color when it comes to pastures. In this “green” discussion, nitrogen is a powerful tool for boosting leaf growth and increasing tiller numbers, and together, these two set the yield potential for the season. But nitrogen can’t work miracles if the soil isn’t ready. Low soil pH or deficiencies in phosphorus and potassium will limit nitrogen’s effectiveness. Think of it like building a house: pH, P, and K are the foundation and walls, and nitrogen is the roof. You can’t put the roof on before the structure is sound. So yes, greening up is a time for nitrogen, but a solid soil fertility program that provides all essential nutrients gives pastures the complete “diet” they need—just like people need a balanced mix of protein, carbs, and vitamins.

Dr. Bruno Pedreira,  
Director, UT Beef & Forage  
Center



*"It is only the farmer who faithfully plants seed in the Spring,  
who reaps a harvest in the Autumn."*

- B.C. Forbes

## BOVINE FOOT ROT

*Dr. Marc Caldwell, DVM, PhD DACVIM, College of Veterinary Medicine, Associate Professor*

March in Tennessee often means mud. As winter fades and spring rains arrive, muddy conditions become common in pastures and feeding areas. Standing water, muddy hay rings, and manure buildup in high-traffic areas create the perfect environment for foot rot, a bacterial infection of the foot in cattle. Foot rot occurs when the skin between the claws, called the interdigital space, becomes weakened or injured. Bacteria commonly found in manure can then enter the wound and cause infection. Affected cattle often show swelling, pain, lameness, discharge, and a foul odor from the foot. Severe pain may cause cattle to avoid putting weight on the affected limb, which can quickly lead to reduced grazing, weight loss, decreased milk production, and impaired reproductive performance. If left untreated, infection can spread to deeper structures like joints and tendons. Wet, muddy environments soften the skin and make it more susceptible to injury. Additional trauma can occur from sharp rocks, rough weeds, cut saplings, gravel, or frozen ground. Treatment typically involves systemic antibiotics, which are highly effective when given early. Pain relief products may also help cattle return to normal movement more quickly. Consult your veterinarian for treatment options and guidance. Prevention focuses on reducing environmental risk factors. Manage muddy areas, rotate hay feeding locations, and keep shelters scraped and clean. In herds where foot rot is common, vaccination may help reduce cases and severity. With proper management and early intervention, cattle can stay healthy and productive through the muddy months of spring. Additional information regarding the health of your herd can be found online at [the University of Tennessee Beef and Forage Center](#).

## WEATHER UPDATE

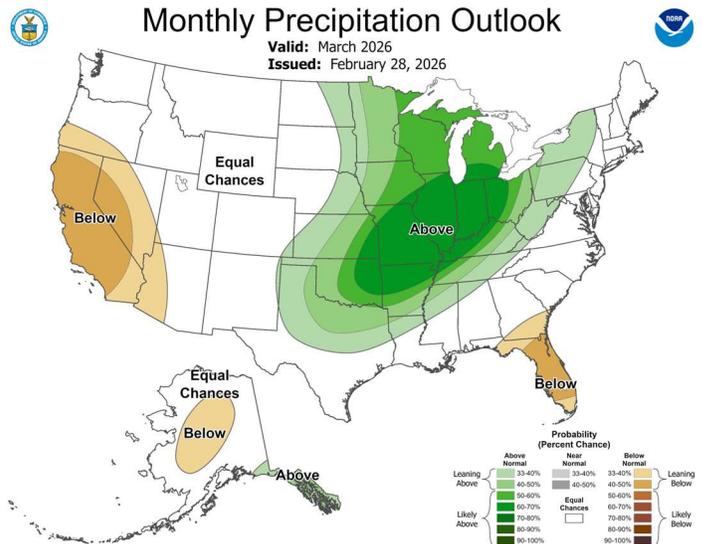
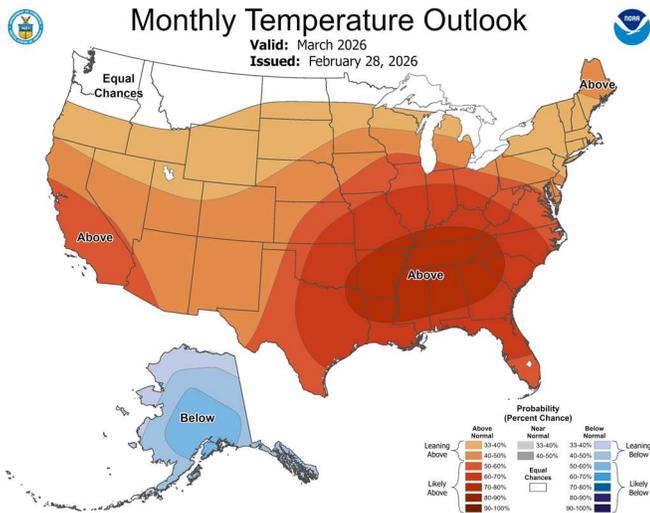
*Dr. Bruno Pedreira, Director, UT Beef & Forage Center*

February’s average temperature was 43.3° F, which is 1.43° F below the 10-year average. Total precipitation for the month was 2.7 inches, about 3.8 inches below normal ([ncei.noaa.gov](http://ncei.noaa.gov)).



Rainfall has been pretty scattered across Tennessee lately. Thus, much of the state is still dealing with drought conditions. Other than a few counties in East Tennessee and parts of the north-central region, about 84% of Tennessee is experiencing some level of drought. At the moment, about 61% of the state is classified as D1 (moderate drought), while another 9% has moved into D2 (severe drought) ([droughtmonitor.unl.edu](http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu)). Greening up has started across Tennessee, and some pastures have already received their spring fertilizer. You can see the state beginning to turn green again. Still, a good rain would be very welcome this March. The outlook, at least, is encouraging. Forecasts suggest above-normal rainfall for March across Tennessee, with the chances increasing from the southeast toward the northwest. Temperatures are also expected to run above average across the entire state, which should help push pasture growth along.





## BULLPOWER: YOUR HERD'S MOST IMPORTANT INVESTMENT

*Dr. Troy Rowan, Assistant Professor, UT Extension Beef Cattle Genetics Specialist*

There is a good reason that so much of our genetic conversation centers around selecting bulls. It's not to say that the cow is not important, she contribute 50% of genetics to her offspring, just the same as a bull does. However, the number of offspring each animal will have over the course of its productive life differs substantially. Bulls leave MUCH larger genetic footprints on commercial herds than individual cows do. An average bull will sire well over 10x as many calves as the most cows will. Further, if you retain females as replacements, the bull's genetic potential sticks around in your herd for subsequent generations. Beyond the outsized genetic footprint, a bull will have on a herd, it is also a large up-front investment in genetic potential. If you've been to a bull sale this spring, it's likely that you have experienced a bit of sticker shock! Bull prices have exploded in response to the strong feeder calf market. With these higher prices it becomes even more important that we understand the genetic potential that we are investing in. EPDs (expected progeny differences) and economic selection indexes help us mitigate some of that risk and ensure that the bull purchases that we're making will return on our investment. While it is easy to look at higher bull prices and panic, it also bears looking at the most recent market report at the same time. A bull with the potential to add 10 lb of weaning weight per calf could generate an extra \$5,000 in revenue over the course of his lifetime. An old rule of thumb is that a good bull should be worth 5 of his calves' value. In our current market with 500 lb calves at \$480/cwt that comes out to \$12,000! While that may be a bit out of budget, it underlines the relative bargain that we are getting in the current bull market compared to calf prices. Spending that extra \$1000-\$2000 on a better bull than your typical purchase has the potential to pay dividends into the future.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Live Stock** - Join us for our broadcast  
- April 8, 2026 at 2 PM ET
- **Southeast Tennessee Beef Summit** -  
- April 24, 2026 at 8 AM ET

Details can be found on [UTBEEF.COM](http://UTBEEF.COM)



**Photo of the Month** by Malerie Fancher:  
Blue skies and warm temperatures make for a great day in Shelbyville at the Bedford County Master Forage Tour!

This and other useful information can be found at your local UT Extension office or on [UTBEEF.COM](http://UTBEEF.COM)

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