



LIVE STOCK

companion

Volume 30: May 2026

MONTHLY TIP

Another sacrifice?

May used to be a beautiful and busy month for forage producers, with plenty of green pastures and haymaking. However, rainfall has not been cooperating, and spring forage production has been compromised. With the last few rains, pastures are green, and some producers are already making hay.

Don't take it for granted! Overall, hay production will be short this year. So, work your hay stock earlier and plan ahead to avoid paying even more for the same bale. Prices should not go down.

Also, remember not to sacrifice too much of your entire pasture area. If you still need rain and pastures are not growing, choose a pasture or a corner of a pasture and define a sacrifice area to feed hay and supplements. Thus, you will damage only a smaller area, not all of your pastures.

Don't turn cows in as soon as the pastures are greening up a little. It will exhaust the plants' reserves. They need time to grow and replace energy before you hit them with cattle!

Dr. Bruno Pedreira,
Director of the Beef & Forage Center



"The best fertilizer is the footprint of a farmer."

- Anonymous

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE BEEF HEIFER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Dr. Saulo Zoca, Assistant Professor and Extension Beef Cattle Reproduction Specialist



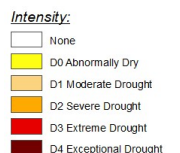
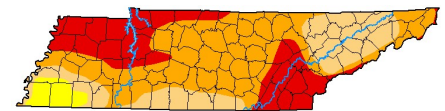
The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture - Tennessee Beef Heifer Development Program is designed to help producers build more productive and profitable cow herds through research-based management and hands-on application. The program focuses on developing high-quality replacement heifers using proven strategies in

nutrition, reproduction, and genetics to ensure females meet target growth goals, conceive early, and remain productive in the herd. By integrating practices such as estrous synchronization, artificial insemination, and comprehensive health management, this program delivers bred heifers with strong reproductive potential and long-term value. Producers are invited to join us for our annual Field Day on May 21, where attendees will have the opportunity to tour the program, evaluate heifers, and gain practical insight into forage, economics, and reproductive management. This year's program will feature presentations from Dr. Oaks, Dr. Bilderback, Dr. Martinez, and Dr. Zoca. The following day, May 22, the Bred Heifer Sale will offer a set of well-developed, bred females ready to contribute to herd success. Join us to learn, connect, and invest in the future of your operation.

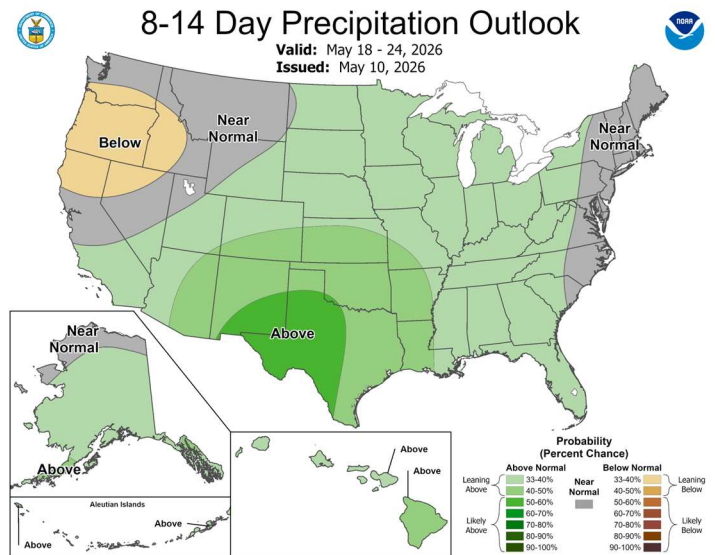
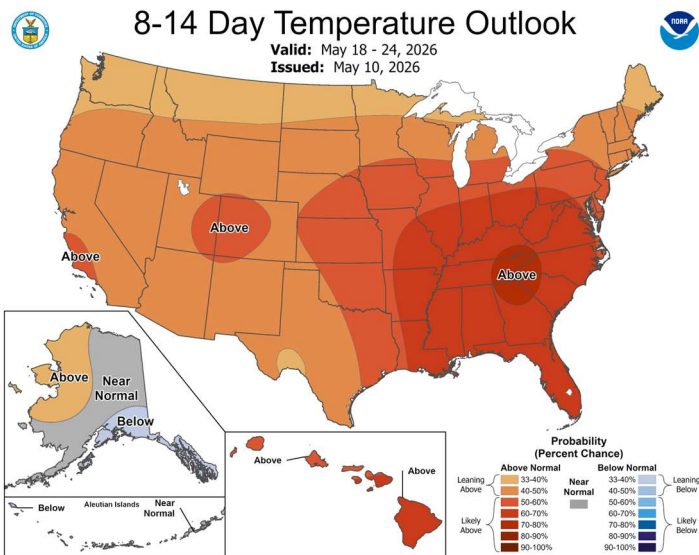
WEATHER UPDATE

Dr. Bruno Pedreira, Director of the Beef & Forage Center

April's average temperature was 64.5°F, about 5.65°F above the 10-year average. Total precipitation for the month was 3.42 inches, 1.5 inches below normal (ncei.noaa.gov).



Tennessee's rainfall has been below average for months. Although some rain has been recorded across the state, as of May 15, about 100% of the state is experiencing drought. Most counties in Northwest and Southeast TN are in Extreme Drought (D3). Rain has been enough to reduce the intensity in Southwest TN, where Shelby, Fayette, and Hardeman are only in Abnormal Drought (D0). Overall, about 95% of the state is in Moderate Drought (D1), with around 72% in Severe Drought (D2), and 27% in D3 (droughtmonitor.unl.edu). However, the forecast is hopeful: above-normal precipitation for the entire state and an 82% chance of El Niño during the May-July period. El Niño can bring a cooler, wetter summer to TN. I hope so!



IT'S GETTING HOT IN HERE: HOW TO KEEP YOUR COWS COOL IN SUMMER

Dr. Blair Downey, Assistant Professor, UT Animal Science

As temperatures heat up, it's time to make a plan to keep cattle cool. Cattle are most comfortable between 32-75 °F, and animals of all ages suffer from heat stress when temperatures exceed this level. Here in Tennessee, our summers are often above this range, and our high humidity makes things even worse. When cattle are heat stressed, they may eat less, struggle to conceive or maintain pregnancy, and even die. Helping cattle handle the heat can be simple:

- Provide shade. Cattle are very motivated to get out of the sun when temperature and humidity are high. Shade can be provided by trees, roofs, or temporary shade cloth. Make sure your shade does not block air flow: provide enough of it so your cattle aren't crowding together, and raise temporary structures high enough off of the ground.
- Provide fresh, clean water. Cattle drink more when heat stressed to make up for the bodily fluids they lose from sweating and panting. Make sure that you have enough waterers and a high enough refill rate to allow for all animals to drink at least twice as much water as they normally do. Cattle prefer clean water and will drink less if troughs are dirty. Clean your waterers now, and make a plan to maintain them throughout the summer to limit algae, feces, and dirt build-up.
- Limit animal handling when temperature and humidity are high. If cattle must be worked, try to start and finish as early in the day as possible. During extreme heat, temperatures may remain high overnight, meaning cows will have no chance to recover; if you can, schedule animal handling for the morning after a cool night.

Taking these simple steps will help keep your cattle comfortable, healthy, and productive all summer long.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Live Stock** - Join us for our broadcast - June 10, 2026 at 2 PM ET
- **Beef Heifer Development School** - May 21, 2026 at 8 AM CT
- **Tobacco, Beef, and More Field Day** - June 25, 2026 at 8 AM CT

Details can be found on UTBEEF.COM



Photo of the Month by Malerie Fancher:

A cow pasture is a perfect place for a Tennessee Master Forage Tour! Thank you to our hosts, Far Horizon Farms, in Johnson County, Tennessee!

This and other useful information can be found at your local UT Extension office or on UTBEEF.COM

T BEEF & FORAGE CENTER

The University of Tennessee is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA institution in the provision of its education and employment programs and services. All qualified applicants will receive equal consideration for employment and admission without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, physical or mental disability, genetic information, veteran status, and parental status