



MONTHLY TIP

Master Forage Program

This month, I'd like to celebrate the first anniversary of the Master Forage Program (MFP) and its impact on advancing forage education across Tennessee and the Southeastern United States. The program was developed in response to a request from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and provides TAEP Cost-Share certification for Tennessee producers.

Delivered by 16 specialists from six institutions, the program combines self-paced online learning modules with in-person forage tours, providing participants with a well-rounded educational experience covering the fundamentals of forage production and management.

In its first year, more than 400 producers enrolled, with 280 earning certification. Participant feedback has been overwhelmingly positive: 97% of participants recommend the program, and 93% report they are likely to adopt new management practices in their operations, including 63% who say they are very likely to make changes.

Invest in your forage knowledge, connect with fellow producers, specialists, and help us improve one pasture at a time.

Dr. Bruno Pedreira



BEEF & FORAGE
CENTER

"The best fertilizer is a farmer's shadow."

- Farming Proverb

NEW WORLD SCREWORM DETECTION IN THE UNITED STATES

Dr. Charley Martinez, Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural & Resource Economics

Through the first half of the year, cattle slaughter is running 8.7% below year-ago levels, while placements have been higher than last year. Together, these trends provide insight into both current and future beef production. Another important piece of the puzzle is dressed weight. As cattle supplies have tightened over the past two years, heavier carcass weights have helped offset lower slaughter numbers and support beef production. In fact, average dressed weight reached a record 902 pounds in March 2026. While weights typically decline into the summer months before strengthening later in the year, the key question is how high they may climb this fall and winter.

Figure 1. Monthly Average Dressed Weights (Cattle), Federally Inspected

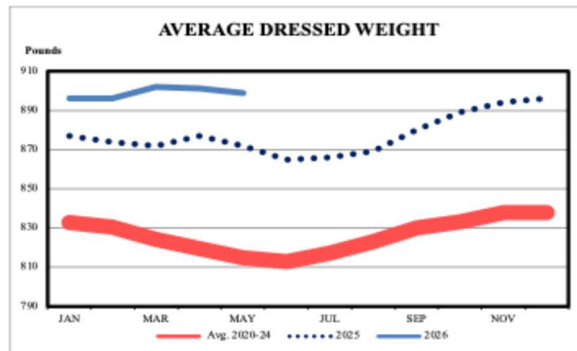


Figure 1 illustrates monthly average dressed weights for 2020–2024, 2025, and 2026. The seasonal pattern remains evident, but 2026 weights are well above both historical averages and last year's levels. The 2020–2024 average declined from 833 pounds in January to a seasonal low of 812 pounds in June before recovering to 838–839 pounds by year-end.

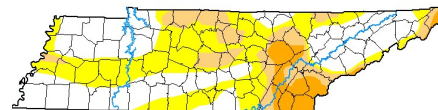
In 2025, weights fell from 877 pounds in January to 865 pounds in June and then increased steadily to about 895 pounds in December. By comparison, 2026 began at 896 pounds, peaked at a record 902 pounds in March, and remained near 899 pounds through May. Current weights are running 20–30 pounds above 2025 and 65–85 pounds above the five-year average. If that margin persists through the second half of the year, average dressed weights could approach 915–925 pounds by year-end, further cushioning the impact of historically tight cattle supplies.

WEATHER UPDATE

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

June's average temperature was 74.1°F, approximately 0.5°F below the 10-year average.

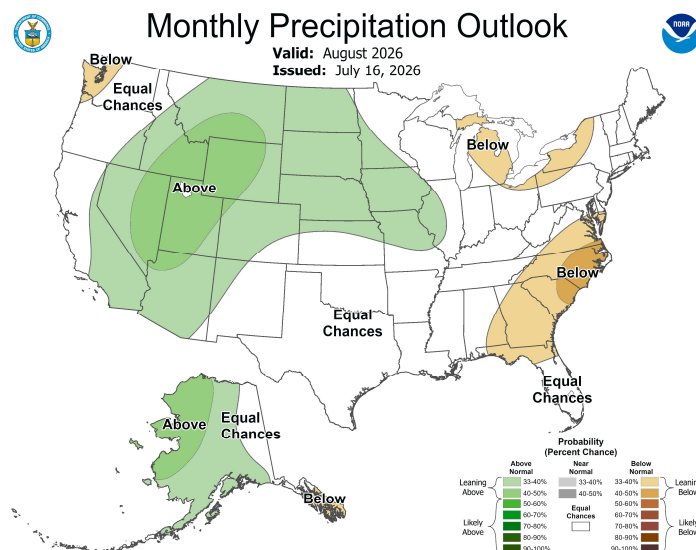
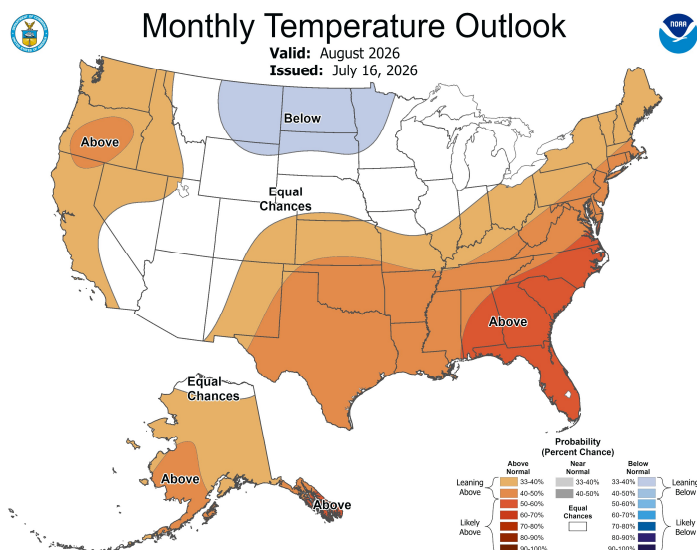
Total precipitation reached 4.52 inches, 0.12 inches below normal (ncei.noaa.gov). Fortunately, rainfall finally returned to Tennessee. After nearly 97% of the state experienced drought conditions, drought coverage has declined to approximately 55%.



Intensity:

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

Looking ahead, the forecast calls for near-normal precipitation and above-average temperatures across the state. In addition, El Niño conditions are present and expected to strengthen through the end of the year, with a 97% chance it will persist through early spring 2027.



MANAGING TICKS ON CATTLE: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Dr. Becky Trout-Fryxell, Professor, Medical and Veterinary Entomologist
Katy Smith, Veterinary Entomology Education Specialist, PhD Candidate

Ticks are becoming an increasingly common challenge for Tennessee cattle producers. While a 2016 University of Tennessee survey found that producers viewed ticks as less problematic than flies and other pests, tick populations have increased in both abundance and distribution over the past several years. In addition to causing irritation and blood loss, ticks can reduce productivity and transmit disease-causing pathogens, making proactive management essential.

The most effective strategy is to prevent ticks from becoming established in your herd. An integrated approach that combines routine monitoring, habitat management, and chemical control provides the greatest level of protection. Regularly inspect cattle, paying close attention to the ears, head, armpits, groin, and tail head. Newly purchased or returning animals should also be checked for ticks before being introduced to the herd. Habitat modification can significantly reduce tick populations. Keep pastures mowed to approximately knee height, trim weeds, and remove overgrown brush. Equipment used in infested pastures should be cleaned and treated with an appropriately labeled acaricide before being moved to another location to help prevent accidental spread. When needed, work with your veterinarian to develop an effective tick control program. Appropriately labeled acaricides, including ear tags, pour-ons, and sprays, can help manage tick populations, including the invasive longhorned tick.

Submit ticks to us here:

Tiny.utk.edu/tickform

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Live.Stock** - Join us for our broadcast
August 12, 2026 at 2 PM ET
- **Steak and Potatoes Field Day**
August 20, 2026 at 8 AM CT

Details can be found on UTBEEF.COM



Photo of the Month by Malerie Fancher:

Dr. Pedreira and members of the UT Beef and Forage Center had the opportunity to discuss with producers about current Center topics and host the Beef and Forage Tour of the Tobacco, Beef, and More Field Day. Couldn't join us in Springfield? Click the link above to learn about the Steak and Potatoes Field Day in Crossville in August!

This and other useful information can be found at your local UT/TSU 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