



Trail News

January 8th, 2020

From the

Meeteetse Conservation District

www.meeteetse-conservevy.net

P.O. Box 237 • 1906 State Street • Meeteetse, WY 82433

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HOW MUCH HAY WILL A COW CONSUME

Estimating forage usage by cows is an important part of the task of calculating winter feed needs. Hay or standing forage intake must be estimated in order to make the calculations. Forage quality will be a determining factor in the amount of forage consumed. Higher quality forages contain larger concentrations of important nutrients so animals consuming these forages should be more likely to meet their nutrient needs from the forages. Also cows can consume a larger quantity of higher quality forages. Higher quality forages are fermented more rapidly in the rumen leaving a void that the animal can re-fill with additional forage. Consequently, forage intake increases. For example, low quality forages (below about 6% crude protein) will be consumed at about 1.5% of body weight (on a dry matter basis) per day. Higher quality grass hays (above 8% crude protein) may be consumed at about 2.0% of body weight. Excellent forages, such as good alfalfa, silages, or green pasture may be consumed at the rate of 2.5% dry matter of body weight per day. The combination of increased nutrient content AND increased forage intake makes high quality forage very valuable to the animal and the producer. With these intake estimates, now producers can calculate the estimated amounts of hay that need to be available. Using an

example of 1200 pound pregnant spring-calving cows, let's assume that the grass hay quality is good and tested 8% crude protein. Cows will voluntarily consume 2.0% of body weight or 24 pounds per day. The 24 pounds is based on 100% dry matter. Grass hays will often be 7 to 10% moisture. If we assume that the hay is 92% dry matter or 8% moisture, then the cows will consume about 26 pounds per day on an "as-fed basis". Unfortunately we also have to consider hay wastage when feeding big round bales. Hay wastage is difficult to estimate, but generally has been found to be from 6% to 20% (or more). For this example, let's assume 15% hay wastage. This means that approximately 30 pounds of grass hay must be hauled to the pasture for each cow each day that hay is expected to be the primary ingredient in the diet. After calving and during early lactation, the cow may weigh 100 pounds less, but will be able to consume about 2.6% of her body weight (100% dry matter) in hay. This would translate into 36 pounds of "as-fed" hay per cow per day necessary to be hauled to the pasture. This again assumes 15% hay wastage. Accurate knowledge of average cow size in your herd as well as the average weight of your big round bales becomes necessary to predict hay needs and hay feeding strategies. Big round hay bales will vary in weight. Diameter and length of the bale, density of the bale, type of hay, and moisture content all will greatly influence weight of the bale. Weighing a pickup or trailer with and without a bale may be the best method to estimate bale weights. Utilizing the standing forage in native and Bermudagrass pastures to supply much of the forage needs during fall and early winter months will reduce hay feeding. An appropriate supplementation program will help the cows digest the lower quality roughage in standing forage. When standing forage is in short supply or covered by snow and ice, hay will become the primary source of feed. The number of days that hay feeding is necessary is hard to predict going into the winter months. Looking back at previous years' records may be the best source of information to help make that determination.

NorthernAg-NET

NO WILD HORSES WILL BE SENT TO SLAUGHTERHOUSES

Congress passed 2020's federal spending bill. One of the provisions in the bill prohibits the U.S. Forest service from selling healthy wild horse and burros for slaughter. The Bureau of Land Management – who manages most of the wild horse herds in the West – has already had a ban in place. But now it has been extended to the smaller herds on Forest Service land. The ban stems from the planned sale of wild horses from the Devil's Garden Wild Horse Territory in California's Modoc National Forest to a slaughterhouse. This sparked an aggressive blowback from every branch and level of government. Ironically, it's already illegal to kill horses for human consumption in California. There still remains the problem of what to do with the ever-growing number of wild horses across the West, which compete with native animals and deplete resources. The American Wild Horse Campaign, which lobbies for wild horse preservation, advocates for fertility control over slaughter and the costly helicopter roundups that are currently conducted.

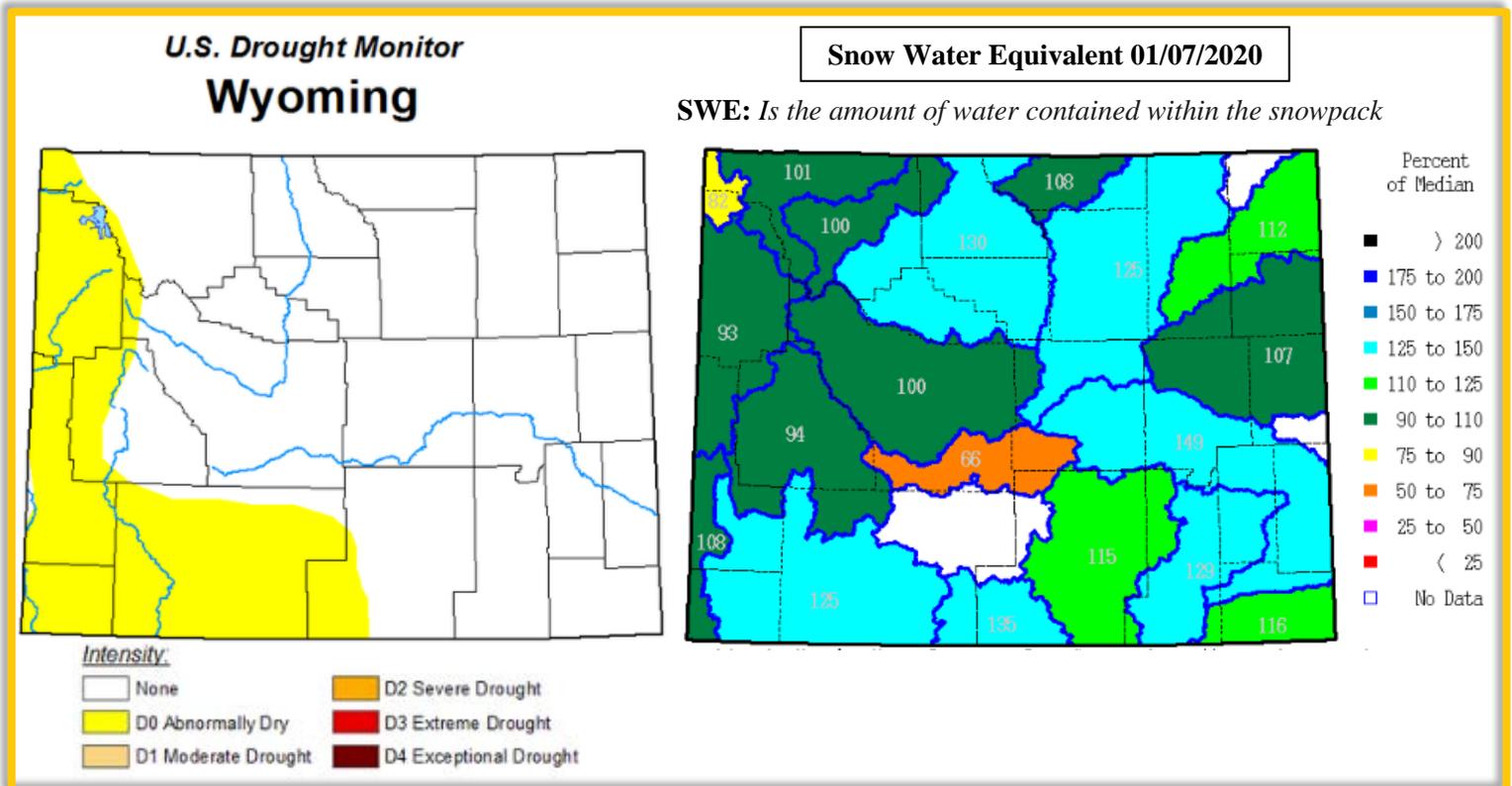
Big Horn Radio Network

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RANGE OFFICIALS FIGHT TWO NEW INVASIVE SPECIES

At first glance, to the untrained eye, ventenata looks like just another invasive annual grass. It's about a foot tall and cures to a golden brown color. That's why Doug Masters didn't initially worry when he saw some on his ranch in Sheridan County. Then in 2016, a researcher with the Natural Resources Conservation Service told him the bad news: The new grass on his land bordering Montana was one of the worst invasive annual grasses to reach the Great Plains. Not long after, experts found another invasive grass – medusahead – on another piece of land he grazed. Left unchecked, the two grasses could spread to make at least two-thirds if not more of his range unusable to animals from cattle and mule deer to sage grouse and songbirds. In a West that has dealt with cheatgrass for more than a century, the advent of these two new grasses is instilling fear in everyone from ranchers to wildlife biologists. Experts need to make a plan and execute before it's too late. Range ecologists don't know exactly how or when ventenata and medusahead arrived on U.S. soil. They're from eastern Europe and southwestern Asia, and have been a problem in Oregon, Idaho and Washington for years. A University of Wyoming graduate student first identified ventenata in 2016 on a ranch in Sheridan County. From there, experts discovered it throughout the western portion of the county and, three years later, have found it in even more locations from the foothills of the Bighorns into Campbell County and throughout Montana down to Interstate 90. Experts found medusahead later that same summer. For Luke Sander, supervisor of Sheridan County Weed and Pest, it was a worst-case scenario. Cheatgrass has been bad enough – it grows in disturbed areas like pasture overgrazed by cattle or blackened by fire – but at least it offers some bit of nutrition to wildlife and livestock in the early spring. Medusahead and ventenata have no nutritional value. They also take over every bit of landscape. "If you take any good you can get from cheatgrass away, you get ventenata," said Brian Mealor, an UW associate professor and director of the Sheridan research and extension center. Their seeds are so high in silica – a mineral compound used to make glass – that animals refuse to eat it. Like cheatgrass, they are an annual grass that reproduces by seed in the fall. They grow in thick bunches and their seeds burrow down to the ground before snow, planting roots, sprouting and even growing at times under snow throughout the winter. When snow melts and the sun appears, they use any moisture and nutrients in the ground, effectively choking out native grasses. And then each plant produces hundreds of seeds that can live for years. The grass dries quickly in the middle of summer, creating a thick fire-prone mat, allowing blazes to rip across the prairie, killing sagebrush and other native plants, leaving behind soil ripe for more medusahead and ventenata. "They dramatically deteriorate critical wildlife habitat across the board, whether you're talking about mule deer and elk to anything that benefits from sagebrush communities. It's, I think, an even further degradation than cheatgrass," Mealor said. "The weed scientists I've talked to said they would trade every acre of medusahead and ventenata to have cheatgrass back. It's hyperbole, but illustrates the level of forage quality." *** Shortly after both species were discovered, anyone with any involvement in weeds including the NRCS, Weed and Pest, the University of Wyoming, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and individual landowners formed a working group to create a plan.

CASPER
Star Tribune



**NEXT MCD BOARD MEETING: WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 12TH @ 1:00 P.M. 1906
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