



ADVANCING THE LEGACY

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WEBINAR Highlights – Dealing with Drought on the Ranch

Recorded November 29, 2021

Presenters: Erika Murphy and Jeff Meyers; owners of Coyote Creek Angus Ranch, Hayden, CO

Drought in the last 3 of 4 years (2018, 2020, 2021) have forced creative adaptation in 4 key areas:

1. Pasture Management

- Use rotational grazing, minimize erosion.
- Limit horse grazing to 4 – 6 hours per day.
- Preserve grass, minimize driving on pastures.
- Be creative - trade hunting rights for pasture.
- Trade irrigated meadow management services for hay (aeration, harrowing).
- Fix fences, check cattle often on leased land.
- Maintain good communication with lessors.
- Control burrowing rodents - Wyoming ground squirrels destroy pasture and burrow into irrigation ditch embankments; 3 controls; 1) shoot, 2) irrigate burrow areas, 3) poison.
- Control weeds, invasive species with aerial spraying and spot spraying.



2. Hay planning

- Buy hay from areas that have received rain, including other states (WY, UT).
- Build good relationship with hay broker.
- Use alfalfa as high quality source of nutrition.

3. Irrigation improvements

- Control erosion in steep ditch areas by replacing with pipe. Use splash boxes, outlet pads, re-seeding, pipe and erosion control fabric. Their cost in 2021 was about \$4 / ft installed.
- Sacrifice less productive areas to fully irrigate high production areas.
- Increase efficiency with gated pipe while retaining benefits of flood irrigation.

4. Herd management / stocking rates

- Reduced herd size to 90 cows after 2018.
- Reduced herd by another 10 cows in 2020.
- Did not retain heifers in 2021.