

Facing reproductive challenges during a drought

Breeding rate edge

Southwestern Oklahoma's challenging terrain and climate proves tough for raising cattle. Dale and Tammi Didlot, of Hicks-Didlot Cattle Co., in Altus, Oklahoma, regularly faced significant drought conditions, with limited water resources and lack of shade.

As with all cattle producers, the Didlots needed their cows to produce offspring each year for the operation to continue to be successful, but they were facing reproductive challenges during drought.

"We ran mostly black cattle at that time," Tammi Didlot said. "We had a significant issue with cattle breeding in this heat and without shade.

"We did a little self-study, if you will, because we had predominantly red cattle on one pasture and predominantly black cattle in another. When we did the study, I had a 30% open rate on my black cows, and we had less than a 10% open rate on the Red Angus."

Her observations confirmed her assumption that red cattle were going to perform better in her southwestern Oklahoma climate.

After discovering first-hand the heat tolerance of red cattle, Tammi and Dale shifted the focus of

their herd toward predominantly Red Angus. When they purchased or kept replacement females they had one main requirement – they had to be red. Today, 80% of their herd is Red Angus and that number will continue to increase.

Docility matters

The Hicks-Didlot Cattle Co. consistently selects for docility and the gentle demeanor of Red Angus cattle is the perfect fit.

"We're not getting younger, and we don't have a lot of kids just chomping at the bit to take over this ranch, so we want docile cattle," Didlot said. "I think in the Red Angus breed, I've never seen bulls that have been more docile."

Fast-growing cattle

Compared to her experience with raising other breeds, Didlot recognizes the value of fast-growing red cattle. "You can get a low-birthweight bull and have a small calf, but they take off and grow quick. And I feel like of all the breeds, that's one of the things I see in Red Angus more than others."



Read Didlots' full story at
<https://bit.ly/RAMDidlot2023>
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The red advantage with heat and cattle health

Joe Hatch, Stoneham, Colorado, has faced some extreme drought conditions over the years in northeastern Colorado.

The ugly twin sister to drought is heat stress, but this is where Hatch sees a tremendous advantage with his Red Angus-influenced cattle.

“Red cattle can stay cooler than black cattle,” Hatch said. “We have less heat stress than some of our neighborhood black cattle. I also think we have fewer fly issues because red cattle don’t bunch up as bad. When cattle get hot, they want

to get in a bunch and make each other even hotter. Then, they get more dust stirred up and more flies invade.”

This stacks healthcare problems, he continued. As cattle bunch up, pneumonia increases.



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Read more about how Red Angus cattle handle drought in this two-part series:
<https://bit.ly/RAMDrought82022>
<https://bit.ly/RAMDrought92022>



Soundness in rough terrain

Rolling Hills Farms of Boone County, Arkansas, has found a leg up on their environment's tough conditions thanks to the power of Red Angus genetics. "They work really well for the type of environment we have," said Laura Wilburn.

Summertime can be a vile season for cattle producers, such as Wilburn, in southern states. Producers must manage hot temperatures and high humidity. These factors can cause severe cases of heat stress for cattle, resulting in reduced intake and gains.

Simultaneously, she must manage fescue endophytes. Fescue serves as a large portion of the grazing forage that many producers throughout southern states have available.

She and her family ranches in northwest Arkansas, along the southern edge of the Ozark Mountains where the topsoil is shallow and rocky. All of these added stressors can leave producers with second-rate cattle performance in the summer months if not managed properly.

The Red Angus breed has turned the Wilburn family lifestyle into a more efficient endeavor — more results with less input. The Wilburns started with sale barn cattle of every color. They tried many breeds, and at one point, leaned toward a Charolais-cross.

"Where we live, it's very steep and a lot of the ground is pretty rough. "I had trouble keeping bulls more than a couple of breeding seasons. Their feet couldn't handle it," said Robert Wilburn. Lo and behold, their solution was found with the purchase of Red Angus bulls from a local breeder.

"The cattle were raised in the same environment without being pushed, and were ready to work from the moment of purchase. These bulls could handle the environment without falling apart," said Robert.

Built for work

Rolling Hills Farms has been satisfied with the breed's very low maintenance requirements, easy fleshing ability and high fertility. Red Angus have excelled in the summer Arkansas climate and work well on endophyte-infected fescue.

"They don't hair-up on the fescue grass compared to other breeds. Those other cattle will hair-up and want to go stand in the pond all summer



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while the Red Angus are out grazing and gaining,” said Robert.

“Where we live, even though the spring has been super wet, we are always two weeks away from a drought. It dries up in a hurry. When it gets dry and the ground is hard, these Red Angus don’t fall apart on you. They hang in there and work for what they are,” he added.

“That’s another reason we have stuck with Red Angus. They take care of themselves. You don’t have to push these cattle.”

Robert said it’s shocking to some how much weight the moderate-size Red Angus pack. “The cattle don’t have to be six-feet tall to reach 700- to 800-lb. weights. With feed prices high this year, I had to cut the amount of what I normally feed to about half, and those cattle still finished out the heaviest we have ever sold,” said Robert.

“They did it all on grass.”

Female foundations

Robert’s biggest draw to the Red Angus females is their fertility even at a young age. He jokes that it’s sometimes a challenge to keep a fence strong enough to ward the bulls out.

“That’s what we want though,” he said. In the past five years, they have pushed Red Angus genetics, which has resulted in a shorter calving season from 120 to 60 days without any hormone regimens.

Robert shared how one cannot have enough of the sought-after Red Angus commercial female.

These females are in high demand for their longevity, fertility, adaptability and efficiency, and coupled with their good disposition make them the ideal cow.



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