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“Drought Management Strategies for Rangelands: Flexibility for Complex Decision Making”

Drought is a primary driver of the structure and function of rangelands. Extreme drought conditions experienced in 2011 and 2012, and continued persistence of these conditions throughout 2013 in much of the western Great Plains, present a challenge to sustainable rangeland management. Droughts can trigger undesirable ecological changes in rangelands, reduce grazing capacity and livestock production, as well as provision of ecosystem services, and threaten ranching livelihoods. Increasing climate variability heightens the need to move beyond reactive drought management practices and policies (e.g., drought disaster designations) and adapt to drought. Drought management strategies for ranchers involve complex decision making regarding economics, animal genetics, forage conditions, plant communities and predictions for future weather conditions. Ranchers, however, often have traditionally used similar drought management strategies (e.g., sell livestock, purchase feed inputs) which have substantial marketing and economic implications. Flexibility in the ranching enterprise could encourage proactive drought management strategies such as reserve forage supplies (e.g., grassbanking through longer rest periods) and different kinds/types of animals (e.g., incorporation of yearlings into traditional cow-calf operations, multiple species of grazers) which could sustain ranching livelihoods, continue provision of livestock production and associated ecosystem services, and increase the resilience of rangelands in response to increasing climatic variability.

WEDNESDAY

SEPTEMBER 4,
2013

4:00 P.M.

Room 1014
Throckmorton
Plant Sciences
Center

Refreshments
at 3:30 P.M.

