



THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA  
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL &  
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

AGECON-06-116

**Utilization of Drought Damaged Crops**

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Cotton and Peanut crops that will be abandoned can be utilized by beef cattle producers in several ways. By utilizing these abandoned crops, cattlemen can reduce feeding costs and/or extend the grazing period and perhaps allow pastures to regenerate if adequate rainfall is received.

The key to effectively utilizing these crops is to match animal nutritional needs to feed quality. Standing cotton will be less than nutritious than un-harvested peanut. So, dry beef cows can utilize standing cotton, lactating beef cows can make use of baled peanut vines, and stockers should be grazed or preconditioned on un-harvested peanut vines.

Abandoned Cotton

Research conducted at the Southwest Georgia Experiment Station at Plains indicates that one acre of standing cotton can provide about 35-45 days of grazing for one mature dry cow. So if a producer has a 40 acre field of cotton to abandon, this could provide about 1.0 to 1.5 months of grazing for 40 dry beef cows.

Abandoned Peanut

Un-harvested peanut can be very similar to alfalfa hay in terms of nutrition. As a result it can be grazed or baled. Cattlemen who are weaning calves may consider grazing them on un-harvested peanut vines. As a general rule, peanut vine yields are approximately 1.5 times the actual peanut yield (1.2 for GA Green and 1.7 for Georgia-02C or C- 99R). For instance, an estimated peanut yield would provide about 750 pound of vines per acre.

When grazing peanut vines, producers will want to supplement with about 1% of body weight of soy hulls per day. Cattlemen should not stock more than 500 pounds of calves per acre. At a stocking rate of one 500 pound steer to the acre receiving 1% body weight of soy hulls per day, cattlemen can expect gains of 2.5 pounds per day for about 30 days (about 75 pounds per calf).

Peanut vines can also be harvested for hay and fed to lactating cows or growing animals. Since the vines should be very similar to alfalfa hay the value of the hay should be about \$150 per ton. Peanut vines for hay should be cut with a mower-conditioner. At \$3/gallon for diesel, cash costs to mow-condition and bale will be around \$34 per acre. Using the vine estimate above of 750 pounds of vine per acre this amounts to \$90 per ton cost to put up hay. However, with a value of \$150 per ton, this is still an economical decision. Even so, cattlemen should closely consider the economics of this decision and compare the economics of adding weight and value to calves by grazing versus \$34 per acre for hay cost plus transportation from the field and storage.

In some instances, the peanuts may be dug and the peanut and vine can be baled together. Peanuts are very high in energy due to the high fat content (48%) and are also high in protein (28%). If the peanuts would yield 500 lbs per acre then the resulting peanut plus vine hay would be approximately 15 to 18% protein and 62 to 67% TDN. This hay could be used for either dry or lactating cows. Dry cows would need no additional protein or energy supplement. Lactating cows need approximately 60% TDN and 11.5% protein. Feed intake per day should be approximately 2% of body weight for a dry cow and 2.5% of body weight for a lactating cow. The hay should supply enough protein, but additional energy may be required, particularly if the hay has significant leaf shattering during baling or is rained on prior to baling. The only way to know if cows will need additional energy is to have the hay analyzed for nutrient content. Contact the local extension agent for help in getting the hay analyzed for nutrient content.

Other Considerations

In addition to feed cattle need water. This is perhaps the most overlooked nutrient by many cattlemen. Table 1 below gives the daily water requirements for various classes of cattle

**Table 1**  
**Daily Water Requirements for Growing Animals,**  
**Dry Cows and Lactating Cows**

Type of Cattle	Gallons Required Per Day
Growing Animals	1.0-1.5 gallons/hundredweight
Dry Cow	1.00 gallons/hundredweight
Lactating Cow	1.80 gallons/hundredweight

There are numerous ways cattlemen can get water to cows for short-periods of times including using irrigation pipe or nurse tanks. However, the bottom line is without water cattle will die very shortly.