

## Planning to cope

By Miranda Reiman

Flood water forces the exodus of cattle to higher ground. Drought does the same on a wider scale, only to greener ground. And in the case of wild fires, tornados and other natural disasters there might not even be time for that.

As if the job of beef producer isn't hard enough, this year Mother Nature seems to have dealt an extra dose of hardship to many locations on the map. If you're not among them, count your blessings. If you are among them, count your blessing—there are still others who have it worse.

When you're done counting, start planning.

There are the immediate plans, like where you're going to find grass for your pairs or how you're going to keep the cattle corralled with the washed out fence line. There are intermediate plans, like figuring out how to pay back that revolving bank loan when production is down or how to move weaning up to reduce grazing pressure.

But the long-term goals are the ones that are easy to lose sight of in a crisis, and understandably so. "Fight or flight" mode leaves little time to consider the future five or 10 years down the road. It's about what's happening now, the immediate cause and effect.

If you're reading this, you're likely not in that group, unless your emergency plan includes catching up on industry news. So that means maybe you do have a moment or two to step back and think. After you're done reading, maybe you could do a little multi-tasking and wear your long-range planning cap while raking hay.

If a natural disaster strikes your farm or ranch, what will you do? If you were forced to move or sell cows, which ones would go? You've been building your herd with consistent genetics that are more valuable than just the market price per pound. How can you make sure your investment of time and money in data and breeding programs isn't just lost, leaving you to start all over again?

Yes, desperate times will call for adjustments. You may need to shift your production calendar, doing things like weaning and feeding cows several months earlier than usual. Or in the case of excess moisture, you might need to find an alternative feedstuff when your prime hayfield is under water.

But think beyond the immediate. If your ultimate goal is selling pounds at weaning, that may suffer in the short term, but you can adjust to select for bulls that deliver both pounds and quality. If quality is king, you can chose marbling in tandem with other production goals. Easy calvers, easy doing cows and easy temperaments have no weather requirements—take that Mother Nature!

If you're reducing numbers, do you have a plan for picking the best of the best to keep? It starts with identification and continues with records. That's something you can start on, or continue with, in the good times.

If you counted your blessings as not affected by disaster this year, ask a blessing for those thousands of cattlemen and women who do have to deal with these heartbreaking choices.

Next time in *Black Ink*, we'll look at successful weaning. Meanwhile, if you have questions for us, call toll-free at 877-241-0717 or e-mail [mreiman@certifiedangusbeef.com](mailto:mreiman@certifiedangusbeef.com). 🐾



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