

WATER FOR BEEF CATTLE

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Water is one of the most important, yet most overlooked, nutrients needed by beef cattle. Water makes up approximately two-thirds of the animal's body mass. It is used in almost all chemical reactions in the body and is also used to help eliminate used and unneeded nutrients in the body.

Producers should strive to keep water sources free of contaminants. This may include manure in water tanks, chemicals from nearby fields, fertilizer from adjacent fields and disease organisms from sick animals. Keeping animals out of water sources such as ponds, springs and streams is desirable. In situations where animals cannot be kept out of the water source, efforts should be made to limit access to these areas.

Producers should be sure that water is readily available to animals. Animals should not be forced to travel long distances to get water. In intensive grazing programs, the pasture layout should be designed around available water sources.

During the winter, it is critical that water sources are not frozen. Frozen ponds limit water consumption and also provide a location for injury from a fall or drowning due to falling through the ice.

The amount of water required by the beef animal is affected by water temperature, air temperature, type of ration, rate and composition of diet, physical activity, lactation, level of salt in the diet and the amount of moisture (water) in the diet. Estimated water intake for various classes of animals is presented on the back of this card.

Additional information on beef cattle nutrition can be obtained by contacting your local Agricultural Extension Service office or from the Extension-Beef, Sheep & Horse home page: www.utextension.utk.edu/ansci

Estimate Daily Water Intake of Beef Cattle, Gallons/Day ¹							
Daily High Temp. (F°)	Cows Nursing Bred Calves ²	Dry Cows	Bulls	Growing and Finishing Cattle			
				400 lbs.	600 lbs.	800 lbs.	1000 lbs.
				Gallons/day			
35	11	6	7	4	5	6	8
50	13	7	9	5	6	7	9
65	16	8	11	6	7	9	11
80	18	11	13	7	9	10	14
95	20	15	20	11	15	17	19

¹Source: Water for Beef Cattle, Tennessee Cow-Calf Handbook, Fact Sheet SR 2002, 1996.
²First four months of lactation.