

Dry spring expected for much of United States

CattleFax market analysts are predicting a likely halt to the expansion of the U.S. cow herd in 2018, at least partly because of weather. Dry conditions have spread across much of the United States and intensified in a large portion of cow country — especially the Southwest. According to CattleFax weatherman Art Douglas, drought conditions are likely to persist and spread even further during the coming months.

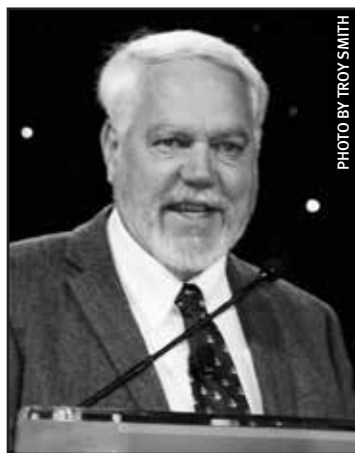


PHOTO BY TROY SMITH

During the first half of 2018, La Niña is likely to keep it dry in the Southwest, with drought concern spreading to the east and northward through much of the Plains and even into the southeastern United States, said Art Douglas of Creighton University.

Douglas, who is Creighton University professor emeritus of atmospheric sciences, delivered his seasonal forecast during the CattleFax Industry Outlook Seminar at the 2018 Cattle Industry Convention Jan. 31-Feb. 3 in Phoenix, Ariz.

Douglas attributed the dry conditions to *La Niña* — the cooler-than-normal sea surface temperatures existing in the central and eastern tropical Pacific. He said *La Niña* also has fueled drought conditions in important crop and cattle production areas of South America, Asia and Australia.

“As we go forward, getting closer to summer, *La Niña* may start easing up,” offered Douglas, agreeing with forecast models predicting a weakening of *La Niña* and transition to *El Niño* (warmer Pacific waters) during the summer.

Throughout the first half of 2018, however, *La Niña* is likely to keep it dry in the Southwest, with drought concern spreading to the east and northward,

through much of the Plains and even into the southeastern United States, Douglas forecast. The areas most likely to receive adequate-to-good amounts of moisture, he noted, include the Northeast and Ohio Valley regions, along with the northern

Rockies and the Pacific Northwest.

Douglas expressed the greatest concern for the already seriously parched southwestern United States, predicting a continued dry and hot spring for that region.

“I expect a scorcher through early

summer with increased fire danger across the Southwest,” stated Douglas.

— by Troy Smith, field editor

Editor's Note: Troy Smith is a freelance writer and cattleman from Sargent, Neb.



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