



Hello, Spring!

Preparing from the ground up...

One of the most important elements to having a bountiful garden, enjoyable yard, or successful crop is a good foundation, your soil. Did you know your local extension office offers you the opportunity to know the strengths & weaknesses of your soil? Soil testing provides you the ability to adjust, adapt, and improve your soil to give you the best possible outcome for your planting.

The Mississippi State Soil Testing Lab strives to provide accurate data along with unbiased recommendations to improve the productivity of your soil. Analysis includes pH, lime recommendation, phosphorus (P), potassium (K), calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg), zinc (Zn), and sodium (Na). There are many benefits to soil testing: customization of both fertilizer & lime recommendations to include application rates according to your indicated crop; adjustment to the most optimal rate of fertilizer & lime; and allowance for the most economical use of fertilizer & lime to reduce waste & overapplication. With minimal cost, soil testing results gives you a tool to help maximize your resources, harvest, and/or profitability based on your needs.

When you are ready to learn more about your soil, bring your soil sample to the Lee County Extension Office, and we will be happy to help box your sample, input your data, and provide you with a receipt for your payment. Test results can usually be expected in two weeks.

More information is online at:

<https://extension.msstate.edu/agriculture/soils/soil-testing>

KNOW where you GROW!



small box= BIG IMPACT

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CATTLE MARKET NEWS

Price Risk Always Exists, even in a Bull Market

By: Kenny Burdine, University of Kentucky



I doubt many would take issue with me calling the last couple of years a “bull market” for cattle. The combination of tight supplies and strong demand has resulted in cattle markets tracing an upward trajectory over the last couple of years. As an illustration, the chart below tracks the daily nearby CME© feeder cattle futures price over the last 26 months. In January of 2023, the nearby feeder cattle futures price was in the \$180’s. As I write this article in February of 2025, the nearby futures price is in the \$260’s.

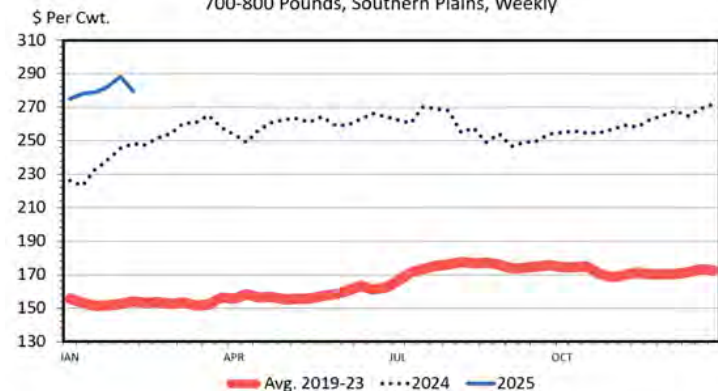
While it is hard to dispute the overall strength of the recent cattle market, it is also important to note that during the last 26 months there have been multiple times when markets saw significant downward swings. The most recent of these occurred since the end of January and was likely sparked by the resumption of live cattle imports from Mexico, continued talk of trade disruptions, Avian Influenza, and any number of other factors. The market also fell by more than \$40 per cwt from September to December of 2023 and more than \$30 per cwt from late May to early September of 2024. For producers who sold cattle during those pullbacks, the impact on returns was significant. There are a lot of potential strategies to manage price risk and the simplest may be a forward contract. By forward contracting cattle, price risk is largely eliminated as the seller and buyer agree on a purchase price prior to delivery of the cattle. A similar strategy would be selling cattle through an internet auction and specifying delivery at a later time. In both cases, the seller entering the forward contract still has production risk as they must meet the specifications of the contract (weight, quality, etc.), but market swings are no longer a concern.

Futures and options markets are also common tools for price risk management. Short futures positions allow producers to capitalize on the expectation of cattle prices in the future through CME© futures prices. When utilizing a short futures position to offset potential decreases in cattle prices, farmers are essentially exchanging price risk for basis risk. Producers utilizing short futures positions also need to plan for potential margin calls if markets move substantially higher. Put options give producers the right to sell a future contract if they choose and they pay a premium for this flexibility. This effectively sets a price floor for cattle as the strike price on the put option and the premium paid sets a minimum price for the cattle being sold.

Finally, I have talked more about Livestock Risk Protection (LRP) insurance than any other risk management strategy recently. It works almost exactly like a put option but has the advantage of flexibility on scale. Unlike several of the other price risk management tools, LRP insurance can be purchased on any number of head, which is much easier for smaller operations to utilize. LRP has been made more attractive over the last several years through increased premium subsidies and allowing producers to pay premiums after the ending date of the policy.

The specific tool or strategy that cattle producers utilize to manage price risk is less important than their overall risk management plan. I encourage producers to know what risk management tools are available to them, understand how changes in sale price impact their profits, and plan to cover themselves from downside price risk. I still feel good about the fundamentals of the cattle market, but I think the first couple weeks of February have been a good reminder that price risk always exists, even in a bull market!

MED. & LRG. #1 FEEDER STEER PRICES
700-800 Pounds, Southern Plains, Weekly



CME(C) Nearby Daily Feeder Cattle Futures
(Jan 2023 to February 2025)



FORESTRY NOTES

Wildfire: Is Your Property at Risk?

By Ms. Susan M. Collins-Smith, MSU Extension Service

Mississippi has ranked among the top half of all states for number of wildfires. For Mississippi, wildfires happen most often in February, March, and April. It is important to take steps to protect your home and other property.



Did you know that wildfire is a common occurrence in Mississippi?

Butch Bailey, a forestry specialist with the Mississippi State University Extension Service, points out that in most years, Mississippi has ranked among the top half of all states for number of wildfires. For Mississippi, wildfires happen most often in February, March, and April.

Mississippi had 2,502 wildfires that burned 52,982 acres, according to the 2024 annual report of the Mississippi Forestry Commission, the agency responsible for responding to and suppressing wildfires. MFC wildland firefighters saved 5,000 structures from those fires.

If you live in the rural-urban interface – areas where human development moves into rural areas – your risk of being affected by wildfire increases.

But you can take some preventive steps to reduce the risk of property damage from wildfire. MSU Extension follows the recommendations of the National Fire Protection Association’s Firewise USA program, which is based on decades of research and outlines simple ways to increase a home’s chances of surviving wildfire.

The home and property around the home is divided into three zones, referred to as the “home ignition zones.”

Start with the Immediate Zone -- the home itself and the area 5 feet out from the furthest exterior point of the home.

Ensure carports, crawl spaces, and underneath decks are free of combustible materials, including chemicals and dead vegetation.

Use 1/8-inch metal mesh screening to cover vents, crawl space openings, and to box in underneath decks with.

Use non-flammable fencing if it will attach directly to the home.

Keep roofs clean by removing leaves, limbs and pine needles.

Remove anything that can burn away from the home’s exterior walls. This includes firewood piles.

Move to the Intermediate Zone – Items that are within 5 to 30 feet out from the furthest exterior point of the home.

Remove vegetation from underneath large stationary propane tanks.

Create fuel breaks with driveways, walkways, patios, and decks.

Keep lawns and native grasses mowed to a height of 4 inches.

Remove any vegetation under trees, called ladder fuels, which can help a surface fire spread to the tops of trees.

Keep at least 18 feet between trees, sometimes more depending on the slope.

Keep the mature tree canopy at least 10 feet from the edge of the structure.

Limit trees and shrubs here to small clusters.

Move to the Extended Zone – Items that are 30 to 100 feet out from the furthest exterior point of the home. Sometimes this can extend to 200 feet, depending on the slope of the property and vegetation present.

In this zone, you want to interrupt a potential fire and keep flames small and on the ground.

Remove and dispose of heavy accumulations of ground litter, debris, dead plant and tree material, and conifers growing between mature trees.

Remove vegetation adjacent to storage sheds or other outbuildings.

Trees should have a minimum amount of space between canopy tops depending on how far away they are from the home, the slope of the property, tree species, and other site-specific conditions. It is best to consult a local forestry professional for individual recommendations.

One last thing: Make sure your address is visible from the road and your driveway has enough clearance for firefighting equipment. This is crucial if there is an emergency.

For more information about wildfires, wildfire prevention, and the Firewise USA program, visit the [Mississippi Forestry Commission](https://www.mississippiforestry.com) and the [National Fire Protection Association](https://www.nfpa.org) websites. This article is on the extension website at: <https://extension.msstate.edu/blog/wildfire-your-property-risk>

What's NEWS?



Three Rivers Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day, March 22nd, 8AM - 3PM

Three Rivers is offering free collection & disposal to all residents in Lee, Pontotoc, Itawamba, Monroe, Calhoun, Lafayette, & Union Counties. This will be for **household hazardous waste ONLY**, no commercial or agriculture waste will be accepted. Do not bring helium tanks, sofas, roofing shingles, any other household trash, biological or infectious materials, explosives, radioactive materials, or unknown substances. You may bring your items to the MSU Agricenter, 5395 HWY 145 S, Verona, on **March 22nd, 8 AM until 3 PM**. For more information go to Three Rivers at <https://trpdd.com/>



4 For 4 launches on April 4th!

You will have the opportunity to help the Lee County 4-Hers online **April 4th**. Funds raised will help supply scholarships, registration fees, & other costs incurred by 4-Hers competing on district, state, & national levels. Be sure to check our Facebook page for more information on how to make a difference in a 4-Her's path to success. <https://www.facebook.com/leecountyextensionms>

2025 Lee County Master Gardener Plant Sale, April 12th, 14th, & 15th

The Lee County Master Gardener Plant Sale is well-known as a social event for all who love to grow plants. Available are many "pass-along" plants not often found in the local retail market plus perennials, annuals, succulents, vegetables, vines, houseplants, and a limited number of trees & shrubs. Miniature gardens, papercrete containers, & some gently used garden items will be available. Cash, cards, & checks are accepted. The sale is **April 12th, 8 AM -12 PM**. Remaining items will be available **April 14th & 15th, 9 AM -2 PM**. Join us at 5338 Cliff Gookin Blvd. in Tupelo. Closer to the sale date, check out the website for a partial list of plants at:

<https://leecountymastergardeners.com/index.html>



Programs hosted by the Lee County Extension Office:

Bloom at Noon provides workshops & instructional meetings to help extend your knowledge in many different areas with meetings the **second Tuesday of each month at 12 PM**. On **March 11th** we will feature Pat Agnew, Student Daffodil Judge, presenting "Daffodils: Harbinger of Spring", a comprehensive program on the origins & descriptive divisions of daffodils according to the Royal Horticulture Society plus information on potential diseases & pests that plague them. On **April 8th** we will have Betsey Moore presenting on daylily care, management, & propagation. Be sure to follow on the Lee County Extension Facebook page for more information. Call ahead to reserve your seat!



Lee County Cattlemen Association connects local cattlemen and provides access to learning and knowledge for the betterment of their cattle herds, from farm to plate. The next meetings will be **Thursdays, March 20th, & April 17th, both at 6 PM**. Call by the Tuesday before the meeting to reserve your plate.



Lee County Forestry Association brings together local land owners interested in proper land & timber management. The next meeting will be **Monday, May 5th at 6 PM**. You will need to call by Friday, May 2nd, to reserve your seat.



We also offer many opportunities for youth ages 5-18 through our 4-H programs.



Please call us at 662-841-9000 for more information or to reserve your seat at our next program!

03



MARCH



2025

EXTENSION

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
23	24	25	26	27	28	01 4-H Winter Classic Horse Show Tippah Co.Coliseum 8:30AM
02	03 Hunting Discipline Practice 8-18 5:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	04 Foodie 4-H 10-18 5 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office - Back Kitchen	05 Crochet Club 10-18 4:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	06	07	08 4-H Livestock Judging Contest MSU
09	10 Cloverbuds 5-7 & Junior Leaf 8-13 4:30 PM Rabbit Club 8-18 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	11 Bloom at Noon Clothoppers 14-18 5 PM Aggies Club 8-18 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	12	13 Expressive Arts 8-18 3:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	14	15 4- H Winter Classic Horse Show MSU Horse Park Starkville 8:30 AM
16	17 Ropes & Reins 8-18 6:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	18 Sewing 10-18 3:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	19	20 Cattlemen Meeting 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	21 4-H Horse & 4-H/FFA Dairy Judging Contests MSU	22 Household Disposal Day 8AM-3PM at Agricenter in Verona 4-H Horse Contests MSU
23	24 STEM Club 5-13 4:30 PM Hunting Discipline Practice 8-18 5:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	25	26	27 Junior Master Gardener 8-13 4 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	28	29 4-H Winter Classic Horse Show Union County Arena 8:30 AM
30	31					

04



APRIL



2025

EXTENSION

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
30	31	01 4-H Club Congress Registration Due Foodie 4-H 10-18 5 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office - Back Kitchen	02 Crochet Club 10-18 4:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	03	04 4-H Wildlife Art Entries Due	05 4-H Horse Bowl MSU
06	07 Hunting Discipline Practice 8-18 5:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	08 Bloom at Noon Clothoppers 14-18 4 PM Aggies 8-18 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	09	10 Expressive Arts 8-18 3:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	11 4 For 4 Fundraiser	12 Master Gardener Plant Sale 8 AM - 12 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office
13	14 Cloverbuds 5-7 & Junior Leaf 8-13 4:30 PM Rabbit Club 8-18 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	15 Sewing 10-18 3:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	16	17 Cattlemen Meeting 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	18 CLOSED Good Friday	19
20	21 Ropes & Reins 8-18 6:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	22 4-H/FFA Youth Stockmanship Regional Contest Prairie Research Unit	23 4-H Ambassador Applications Due	24 Junior Master Gardener 8-13 4 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	25	26 NE District 4-H Shooting Sports Contest
27	28 STEM Club 5-13 4:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	29	30	01	02	03

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