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Range and Pasture Conditions

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” is the opening sentence of *A Tale of Two Cities*, by Charles Dickens. Looking at the first release of the Pasture and Range conditions by the USDA one could almost say “It was the best of range, it was the worst of range” *A Tale of Two Regions*. California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada and Utah all have over 80% of their range rated Good to Excellent. California and Nevada have 99% and 97% rated Good to Excellent. By contrast, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma all have less than 20% of their range rated Good to Excellent and 76%, 62%, 52% and 45% of the range is rated Very Poor or Poor in those four states, respectively. Florida falls in with the “have nots” and Missouri, Kansas, Colorado and Wyoming are quite variable within each state. Most of the other major cattle states have fairly decent range conditions to start off the pasture season. Nebraska has 60% of range in the Good to Excellent condition and conditions are similar in North and South Dakota and Montana. The cornbelt states generally have very favorable pasture conditions as do Kentucky and Tennessee.

I am left to ponder one question, with all the lighter weight calves placed into feedlot in the last couple of months, are there any yearlings to turn out on that green grass? Maybe I can answer that question in July after I see the mid-year inventory report.

The Markets

Slaughter cattle prices were \$1 lower in the south with trade occurring on Friday and prices were \$2 lower in the north this last week with trade on Thursday. Trade volume was large in both the north and south. Prices were mostly \$78 in the south and generally \$125-126 in the north. Choice boxed beef prices were higher on average this week but lost some ground late in the week. The weekly average price was \$2 higher than the prior week. The Choice-Select spread increased and remains wider than the historical level. Feeder cattle prices were steady to higher this week in Nebraska and Kansas. 7-weight steers were \$2-2.50 higher and calves were down a little in Kansas but were higher in Nebraska on a very limited volume.

	Last Week	Previous Week	Last Year
Kansas Fed Steer Price, live weight	\$78.04	\$78.91	\$90.64
Neb. Fed Steer Price, dressed weight	\$125.84	\$127.90	\$144.62
700-800 lb. Feeder Steer Price, Kansas 4 market average	\$103.32	\$101.07	\$114.19
500-600 lb. Feeder Steer Price, Kansas 4 market average	\$125.55	\$126.34	\$139.71
700-800 lb. Feeder Steer Price, Neb. 7 market average	\$107.48	\$105.12	\$116.83
500-600 lb. Feeder Steer Price, Neb. 7 market average	\$137.00	\$134.53	\$146.34
Choice Boxed Beef Price, 600-900 lb. carcass	\$148.62	\$146.33	\$162.00
Choice-Select Spread, 600-900 lb. carcass	\$18.19	\$16.19	\$16.53