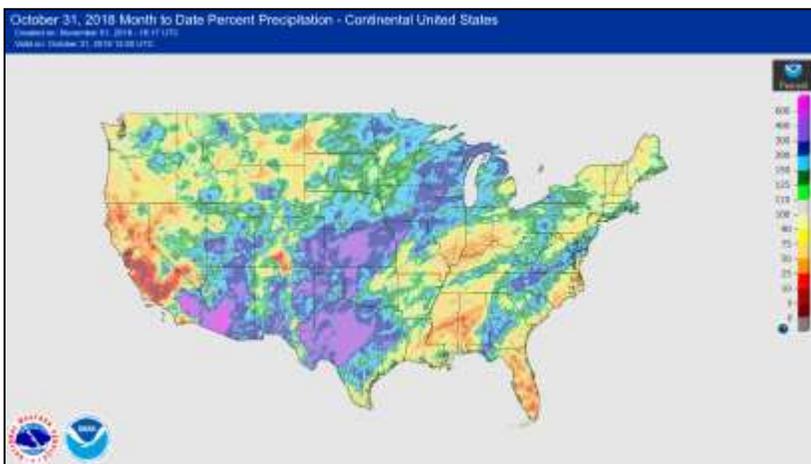


Within the last month, winter grazing conditions in the Southern Plains have gone from optimistic to relatively dismal. In late September winter wheat plantings were going strong and hopes were high for a full season of winter wheat grazing after a dry summer. Excessive October precipitation has drastically altered that outlook.

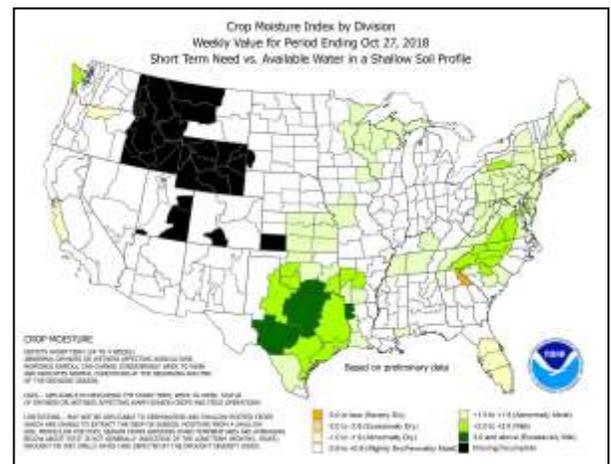
According to the National Weather Service October precipitation was in excess of 150% above normal for almost all of Texas and Oklahoma, with some areas receiving precipitation 400% above normal. The graphic below highlights large stretches of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas receiving above average rainfall in October.



That moisture has translated into muddy soil conditions and has slowed both plantings of wheat pasture as well as the ability for cattle to move onto those pastures. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has characterized counties in these states as Abnormally Moist to Excessively Wet in the Crop Moisture Index (shown to the right). This short term index explains the steady slowdown in winter wheat planting progress seen in USDA-NASS's Crop Progress report. On September 30, 2018 winter wheat planted was ahead of the five year average by 3 percentage points nationally, and by a larger margin in Kansas and Oklahoma. By October 14th, that progress had slowed to 2% behind the 5 year average. Kansas was listed as 3% behind, Oklahoma was

4% behind, and Texas was 1% behind. The latest crop Progress report showed winter wheat plantings behind by 7% on a national basis. Texas is now 8% behind the five year average, Oklahoma is set back 10% and Kansas is lagging by 13%. It takes approximately a month from planting for the wheat to grow enough to put cattle out to graze. This translates in those states to significant losses in grazing ability and forage availability. Excessive mud may also delay turn-out onto wheat pastures that is ready for grazing.

The cattle destined for these pastures are primarily calves that have already been bought. The delay represented in crop progress has likely forced some stocker operations to move



those cattle to feedlots if they do not have the facilities to hold cattle for a long period of time.

The Cattle on Feed report explicitly asks for animals being fed a feed ration for slaughter, which should not include these animals that are stopping over until the winter grazing prospects improve. The uncertainty in the winter grazing situation may make these cattle more fluid than in other years. Acres of wheat planted this late face greater risk with lower temperatures and would likely not be available until late December. It is likely that some of those cattle may stay on feed but would not have necessarily been reported in the Cattle on Feed placement number, which could make for some interesting Cattle on Feed reports in the coming months.



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