



FARMER PICTURE GUIDE · EL NIÑO 2026-27

Keep your animals alive in the drought

Simple steps for cattle and goat farmers: feed, water, body condition, selling, and disease

From the **Veterinary Association of Zambia** · Ask your vet or camp officer for help · www.vaz.org.zm

PART B · FOR FARMERS

Ten golden rules for the dry season

This year the rains are likely to be poor, especially in the South, West and Centre of Zambia. Follow these ten rules to keep your animals alive.



1 Save feed now

Keep maize stalks, groundnut and bean leaves. Do not burn them.



2 Protect water

Fence and clean water points. Give water every day.



3 Look at your animals

Check how thin or fat they are every month.



4 Make groups

Put animals with the same needs together.



5 Sell early

Sell old, sick and extra animals while prices are good.



6 Keep the mothers

Pregnant cows and heifers are your future herd.



7 Vaccinate

Before the rains, and before animals get weak.



8 Dip every week

Ticks spread deadly diseases. Deworm too.



9 Never eat dead animals

Report sudden deaths to the vet at once.



10 Call your vet

Ask your vet or camp officer before you act.

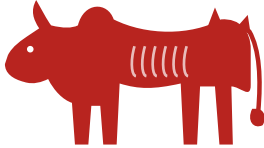
Remember: it is cheaper to keep an animal alive than to replace it. Act early.

B1 · BODY CONDITION

Is my animal too thin?

Look at your cattle from the side and from behind every month. Look at the ribs, the backbone and the hip bones. Give each animal a score from 1 (very thin) to 5 (very fat).

1

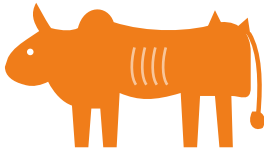


VERY THIN

Ribs, spine and hip bones stick out sharply

► **DANGER: call the vet now. Feed the best you have, or sell / slaughter**

2



THIN

Ribs easy to see; hip bones show

► **Give extra feed and lick now. Check worms and ticks**

3

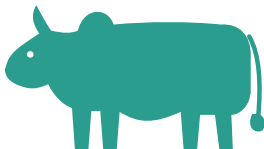


GOOD

Ribs just covered; smooth back

► **Keep it so. Check every month**

4

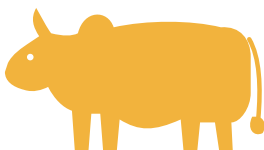


FAT

Round body; ribs not seen

► **Good. Feed the thin ones first**

5



VERY FAT

Very round; fat at tail

► **Rare in drought. Cut extra feed**

TARGET: keep cows at 3 (never below 2½). A cow should be about 3½ when she calves.

B2 · GROUP YOUR HERD

Put animals with the same needs together

Not every animal needs the same feed. Mothers feeding a calf, and cows about to give birth, need the most. Put them in groups so the best feed goes where it is needed.



Cows with a calf

NEED THE MOST FEED



Cows heavily pregnant

NEED A LOT



Pregnant heifers

NEED A LOT, still growing



Young heifers

NEED GOOD FEED to grow



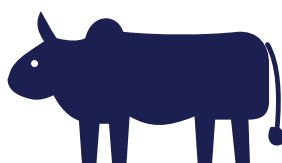
Weaned calves

need soft, good feed



Dry cows (not pregnant)

NEED THE LEAST



Bulls, steers, old cows

SELL EARLY

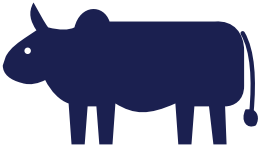
Feed first: cows with calves, heavily pregnant cows and pregnant heifers. They are the future of your herd.

Wean early: if mothers are getting thin, take calves off milk at about 4 months, with your vet's advice. The mother can then keep her strength.

B3 · FEED AND WATER

Count your feed: will it last until the rains?

Each animal needs dry feed and water every day. Add up what your herd needs, and compare it with the feed you have.

 Cow  dry feed / day 12 kg  water / day 40–60 L	 Young heifer  dry feed / day 8 kg  water / day 25–40 L	 Calf  dry feed / day 4 kg  water / day 10–20 L	 Goat or sheep  dry feed / day 1–1½ kg  water / day 4–8 L
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Quick sum: one cow eats about 12 kg of dry feed a day. From November to March (150 days) that is about **1.8 tonnes for ONE cow**. Ten cows need about 18 tonnes. Do you have it?

Good feeds to save and use



Maize stalks
(stover)



Hay cut early
and stored



Oilcake:
sunflower,
cotton, soya



Tree pods and
leaves

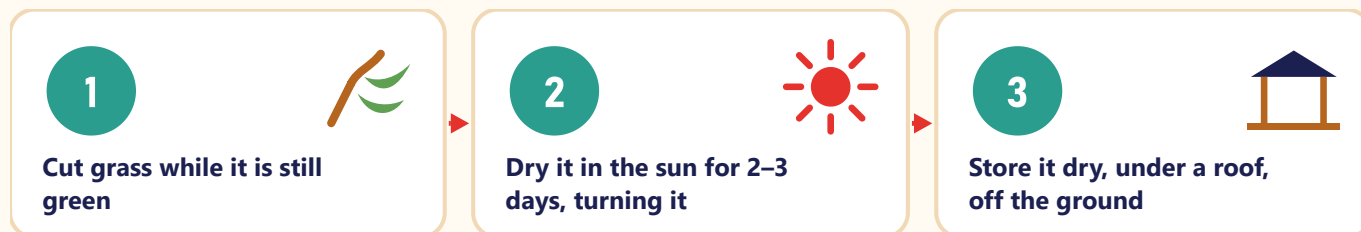


Mineral and salt
lick



Store feed under
a roof

Make and keep your own hay



Water: in hot weather give water every day, in clean troughs. Keep animals out of muddy pools: they carry liver fluke and anthrax. Water and graze in the cool hours; give shade.

Urea is poison if used wrongly. Only use urea in feed or licks after your vet or extension officer shows you how. Never put it in drinking water.

B4 · KEEP OR SELL?

Protect the mothers, sell the rest early

If you do not have enough feed, sell some animals **now**, while they are still in good shape and prices are good. Waiting means thin animals and low prices.



KEEP & FEED



Pregnant cows



Pregnant heifers



Young heifers (good shape)



SELL EARLY



Old bulls



Old or barren cows



Steers and extra males

Selling together through your cooperative can get you a better price. A weak animal that cannot be fed should be slaughtered safely, with the vet's approval, not left to die.

Moving your animals to a relative, the plains or the river? Six checks first



Visit the new place first

Is there enough grass and water?



Count other herds

How many cattle, goats and wild animals are there?



Check diseases there

Ask the vet about FMD, CBPP, ticks and tsetse.



Get a movement permit

From the District Veterinary Office.



Vaccinate, dip, deworm

Before you move the animals.



Plan the journey

Water on the road; do not walk weak animals far.

B5 · ANIMAL HEALTH

Protect your animals from disease

Hungry animals get sick easily. Sickness wastes the little feed they eat. Four things keep them strong:



Vaccinate

Anthrax, blackquarter, botulism, lumpy skin: before the rains



Dip every week

Ticks kill with East Coast fever



Deworm

Worms and liver fluke steal the feed



Give a lick

Salt and minerals every day

Call the vet or camp officer at once if you see:



Not eating, standing alone



Very thin and weak, cannot stand



High fever, fast breathing



Swellings, wounds or lumps on skin



Bleeding from nose, mouth or anus



Shaking, frothing, falling down



Sores in mouth or on feet, limping



Sudden death of any animal



NEVER eat, sell or cut an animal that died suddenly

It may be ANTHRAX, which kills animals and makes people very sick.

Do not open it. Keep people and dogs away. Call the vet the same day.

Use only medicines from registered agro-vet shops. Follow the dose on the label and ask your vet before using antibiotics. Do not sell milk or meat from treated animals until the waiting time is over.

B6 · RECOVERY

When the rains return

The danger is not over when the rain falls. Weak animals can die from sudden changes in feed, and diseases rise in the wet season.

1



Go slowly onto green grass

Mix with dry feed for 1–2 weeks to avoid bloat and diarrhoea.

2



Vaccinate before and with the rains

Lumpy skin, three-day sickness, blackquarter.

3



Dip more often

Ticks increase fast when rains come.

4



Keep checking condition

Thin cows need time before they can get pregnant again.

5



Rebuild carefully

Buy healthy animals with papers; quarantine and vaccinate them.

6



Plan for next time

Grow fodder, store hay, keep a feed reserve.



DO

- ✓ Plan feed and water early
- ✓ Score body condition monthly
- ✓ Sell extra animals early
- ✓ Vaccinate, dip, deworm
- ✓ Report sick and dead animals



DON'T

- X Burn crop residues
- X Wait until animals are very thin
- X Eat animals that died
- X Use urea without training
- X Move animals without a permit