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I'd like to thank all of the committee members for your time and your concern for our drought conditions and also for the opportunity to speak with you.

As you've probably read, 65% of South Dakota is experiencing drought conditions. The county that I live in, Meade, is in the extreme drought level according to the USDA Drought Monitor. Obviously, Spring is our wet season, so when you see stock ponds, dams, and creeks so dried up that there is dried cracked ground in the bottoms rather than water, it is very concerning to say the least. This condition is causing cattle producers to start considering their options. Some of these options are liquidation of part or all of the herd, purchasing feed, and finding other ways to get water to the cattle.

Our ranch has already sold off 90 head of it's breeding stock because of fear of not enough grass and falling cattle prices. The cattle market is extremely depressed right now so liquidation can be a very tough decision. In my opinion the best way to help cattle producers, and with no cost to the taxpayer, is to fix our broken cattle market caused in part by meat packer concentration.

As for purchasing feed for your herd, with some of the highest grain and hay prices in recent memory, buying feed can be hard to justify financially.

Lastly, getting water to cattle can be the most difficult. Same areas are not capable of getting water wells drilled and depend solely on runoff. Hauling water is often cost and time prohibitive so these, sometimes large tracts of land acres, quickly become unusable to livestock and wildlife alike. Fortunately, through EQUIP, CSP, and

Emergency Water Projects, There have been countless miles of water pipeline put in the ground. Our ranch has installed over 15 miles of pipeline. many of which were made possible by these programs. These watering stations keep cattle spread out in the pastures and also provide water for countless wildlife such as deer, antelope, and grouse just to name a few. The benefits of these programs will be felt for decades.

In past droughts, releasing CRP acres for haying and grazing has helped provide affordable feed for cattle. In the drought of 2005, releasing CRP acres for haying, gave me the affordable feed I needed and prevented me from having to sell part of my herd. Releasing these acres early enough so that the feed value is still high is crucial however. Releasing available grazing allotments can have a very positive effect as well. Every cow that we can keep grazing and out of the sale barns helps the cattle market from being flooded and forcing prices even lower.

As you can see drought can have compounding effects on producers. When you consider the amount of land currently experiencing some levels of drought across the western U.S. and the corresponding effects on livestock production and wildlife habitat you begin to get a feel for the overall problem we are facing

As a private landowner drought is simply one of the forces of nature that I deal with. Yet there are steps you can take that help farmers and ranchers make the best management decisions we can, and we appreciate your consideration of these.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today and I will standby for questions.