



9-15-2016

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Recommended Citation

Ford, Terry W. (2016) "From My Daughter's Farm: Drought and Heat," *Westview*: Vol. 32 : Iss. 2 , Article 39.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol32/iss2/39>

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From My Daughter's Farm: Drought and Heat

by Terry W. Ford

It isn't Texas, after all.
We're only thirty miles in from
Lake Michigan,
and weather comes from the west.
How could we not have rain?

In May and June we sweltered.
Clouds towered on the horizon,
but no rains came.
Pastures turned brown;
they looked as if we'd had a brush fire.

In the coop, my daughter found a dead chick.
Our dependable Columbian Wyandottes
stopped laying.
We turned on sprinklers
to cool the cattle and the horses
(neighbors lost a milk cow
in the heat).

With nothing in the fields for grazing
we are feeding hay—in summer.
It's gone from twenty
to eighty dollars for a bale.

From the roadside,
feed corn looks to be fine.
But the cobs aren't filling in.
(feed and hay will be sky high
this fall and winter too).
This spring a friend of ours put
sixty thousand into seed;
he's lost it all
and has no crop insurance.

We slaughtered our steers and heifers.
We'll have to sell some breeding cows
to folks who can still
afford to keep them.
We're seriously discussing
getting out completely.

Last night, rains came—
pounding, driving against
our parched, dry fields
and gardens.
The air cooled;
we slept upstairs.
This morning, I wore a jacket
to do the chores.

In the henhouse,
there were four eggs.
It's at least enough
for breakfast.

One of the cows did not come up for
grain.
I found her far across the pasture
under the shady pines,
nursing the smallest calf I've ever seen—
new this morning.

Our horses are feeling frisky,
butting each other
and rolling in the mud.

After chores, I took the dogs for a long walk.
A morning like this is almost enough to make you hopeful.
But I doubt the break will last.