

Water Systems for Beef Cattle

Garry (Steve) Glass, Decatur County Extension Agent & Director
UT Extension Service, 71 West Main St., Decaturville, TN 38329
731-852-2831 gglass3@utk.edu

In the past five (5) years, 186 water systems have been installed on beef cattle farms in Decatur County. Most systems utilize a county or city water source of chlorinated water. This is a cost-share program through the NRCS and Tennessee Dept. of Agriculture cooperating with eligible beef producers. The system consists of a 10 ft. x 10 ft. concrete pad with a 4-ball waterer plus the water line to the source of water. Average cost will be \$1600 to \$1700. The cost-share amount ranges from 50 to 75% and the farmer has to fence out the existing water sources (mostly ponds).

Three reasons why farmers are completing these water systems are:

1. *Biological benefits* – reduces existing bacteria, viruses and protozoa
2. *Physical benefits* – improves water color, no sediment, less algae & odor, affects temperature and turbidity.
3. *Chemical benefits* – reduces nitrates, phosphates & sulphates in the water

County beef producers have noticed better herd health, less foot rot and easier cattle management. Fenced ponds become more attractive and are used for bull lots.