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**Chadrad Communications, Inc.**  
226 Bordeaux St - Chadron, NE 69337  
308-432-5545 fax 308-432-5601  
E-mail: [kcsr@chadrad.com](mailto:kcsr@chadrad.com)



**(Neb.)-Farmers Hope White Snow Will Herald Green Grass In Dry Nebraska**



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 02/21/2013 10:00 AM

IMPERIAL, Neb. (AP) - For Nebraskan Jerry Kuenning, Thursday's snow seems to be something of a disappointment.

His family runs a ranch and feedlot operation about 15 miles north of Imperial in southwest Nebraska, and the state's continuing drought has been hard on cattle producers.

Kuenning says the snow that was forecast "and what we got was kind of bust." He estimated he'd seen no more than 5 inches by 8:30 a.m. and that the snow had stopped. The National Weather Service says more is headed his way.

He says cattle operators are going to pay a price, one way or another.

They may struggle with heavy snow - if it comes - but "we sure as heck got to have some moisture so we have green grass to take the cows to."

Climate experts say the drought affecting 56 percent of the country is likely to linger in Plains and Western states this spring and expand in northern California, Texas and Florida.

Experts from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center and the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln released their latest predictions Thursday.

Currently, the section of the country affected by severe or extreme drought is slightly smaller than the 61 percent at the start of 2013.

But the February-through-May drought forecast is bad news for many farmers and ranchers who have been dealing with drought at least since last year.

NOAA climatologist Dan Collins says below-average precipitation is expected this spring in most Western states and the southeastern United States.