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FORAGE OPTIONS WITH DAMAGED CORN

The most common salvage operation for corn damaged by hail, wind, drought, or other calamities is to chop it for silage. Don't be in a hurry, though. Standing corn currently could be over 80 percent moisture. The easiest way, and maybe the best way, to lower moisture content is simply wait until some stalks start to turn brown. Waiting also allows surviving corn to continue to add tonnage.

If waiting isn't desirable, reduce moisture by windowing the crop and allow it to wilt one-half to one full day before chopping. You also could mix grain or chopped hay to freshly chopped corn to lower the moisture content. It takes quite a bit of material for mixing though – about 7 bushels of grain or 350 pounds of hay to lower each ton of silage down to 70 percent moisture from an original 80 percent moisture. That's 7 bushels grain or 350 pounds of hay for each ton of silage.

Or, you can allow that windrowed corn to dry completely and bale it as hay. Be sure to test it for nitrates before feeding.

Grazing might be the easiest way to use damaged corn, and this is a good way to extend your grazing season. You might even plant some sorghum-sudangrass or oats and turnips between rows to grow more forage for grazing if previous herbicide use will allow it and you can wait until late fall before grazing. Be sure to introduce livestock slowly to this new forage by feeding them before turning in to reduce the chances of digestive problems. Also, strip graze the field to reduce trampling losses and get more grazing from the corn.

We can't change what Mother Nature has dished out. All we can do is make the best of a bad situation.

Dr. Bruce Anderson, Extension Forage Specialist
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
314 Keim Hall—East Campus
Lincoln NE 68583-0915
402-4742-2577
banderson1@unl.edu



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