

For: Around the County
Brent Plugge
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Tools to Are Available to Assist Producers Grazing Crop Residues

Harvest season will soon be here and with that comes an abundance of crop residue. This is an excellent feed resource for beef cattle. The University of Nebraska Extension recently developed two educational support tools to aid in making the fall and winter grazing season a successful one.

The first is the Crop Residue Exchange which is an online tool with the goal of bringing farmers with crop residue and cattle producers who are looking for crop residue together in a mutually beneficial agreement. A recent UNL survey funded by SARE showed that 17% of farmers that do not have any cattle grazing corn residue, on acres they farm, identify the lack of access to cattle as the major reason why. This online exchange serves as a way for corn and other crop producers to better market their crop residue to cattle producers and develop these grazing agreements.

The Crop Residue Exchange is available online at <http://croppresidueexchange.unl.edu>. After establishing a login account, farmers can list cropland available for grazing by drawing out the plot of land available using an interactive map and entering in basic information about the type of residue, fencing situation, water availability, and dates available. Producers also provide their preferred contact information. Livestock producers can login and search the database for cropland available for grazing within a radius of a given location of interest.

While the primary objective of this exchange is to assist in the development of farmer-cattlemen relationships, in the near future the exchange also seeks to provide educational materials and tools that support these relationships. Items under development include a lease agreement template to assist in the contract arrangement between the cattle owner and the farmer, links to tools and guidelines to help farmers and cattle owners correctly stock crop residue fields, and summary information on crop residue grazing rates. These will be available to all registered users of the exchange.

A second educational tool is the Corn Stalk Grazing Calculator. This calculator allows users to consider corn yield as criteria for calculating the worth of your crop residue.

There is a number of ways this tool can be used:

- You can estimate acres needed, using the number and size of the animals, the length of time in days animals will be grazed on the corn stalks, and the corn yield.
- You can estimate the number of animals given their size, number of available acres, number of days you expect to graze, and the corn yield.
- You can estimate the number of days to graze, given size and number of animals, available acres, and corn yield per acre.
- You can establish cost per animal daily and over the whole grazing period, estimate total cost for all animals and estimate nutrient cost.

This calculator also figures and includes cattle transportation costs as well as care and supervision costs in the totals near the bottom of the spreadsheet. If producers have a cost per head per day target it may be necessary to adjust the cost per acre.

If you have questions about these two tools, please do not hesitate to contact your Nebraska Extension office. I am hopeful you have a very successful grazing season.