

Views from VanDeWalle

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Get The Most From Grazing Corn Stalks

My colleague and Extension Specialist, Bruce Anderson recently provided some tips for grazing corn stalks which I've decided to share in the first part of my column this week.

One of the most important decisions in all grazing situations is stocking rate, including corn stalks. Fortunately, you can get a good estimate for corn stalks by dividing the corn grain yield by 3.5 to estimate grazing days per acre for a 1,200-pound cow.

So, for a field that yielded 210 bushels per acre, dividing 210 by 3.5 gives 60 grazing days per acre. Thus, a 160-acre field could provide 9,600 cow grazing days. That means you could graze 9,600 cows for one day or 1 cow for 9,600 days. Not very practical, so some other combinations need to be explored.

One possibility is to graze 60 cows for 160 days. Starting here at the end of October, that could take you all the way through March. Sounds pretty good but how will this work nutritionally? Cows will eat the best feed first, any downed grain and the husks. After a couple months, all that will be left are stalks and leaves that have been walked over, rained or snowed upon. Without a lot of supplements, these cows will be in very poor shape by the end of March.

Clearly, shorter grazing periods are needed. Maybe, instead of 60 cows for 160 days you graze 160 cows for 60 days. Better, but you still may need supplements near the end of the 60 days. Better still would be to give those 160 cows just one week's worth of the stalks to start, a little over 18 acres. By day 6 and 7 those 160 cows will have cleaned up just about everything, but on day 8 you give them a fresh 18 acres, returning them to high quality feed without so much supplement.

Both stocking rate and changes in the quality of grazing with time need consideration as you plan and manage stalk grazing. Do it right and corn stalks become a great winter feed resource.

Source: Bruce Anderson, Extension Professor- University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Remember Ag Safety

Last week I attended the Progressive Agriculture Safety Day coordinator training. This training provides excellent resources for the annual Progressive Agriculture Safety Day we have each May in Geneva. By participating in this program, national donors provides us the opportunity to provide youth t-shirts, access to vital curriculum materials and other support. At the training, two staggering statistics reinforced my reason for continually offering this program to area youth. In North America, every 3 days, a child dies due to an ag-related accident. Also, in North America, every day 33 youth are injured in an agricultural setting.

The vision of Progressive Agriculture Foundation is that "no child would become ill, injured or die from farm, ranch or rural activities." As the mother of two school-aged children, I try to stress the importance of safety in and around crop and livestock areas, but it just takes one moment for an accident to happen so please remember to take it slow and easy this harvest season. The stress of farming and ranching is large and taking care of yourself is important not only for your health but to those around you. Our local ag safety day planning committee will be meeting after the first of the year to plan our program. If you or your business would like to contribute financially to our local youth or be involved in our program, please contact me at (402) 759-3712 or brandy.vandewalle@unl.edu and I'd be glad to talk about ways to effectively teach our youth about ag safety.