In The Field

Nebraska Soybean & Corn Pocket Field Guide
2017 Edition

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Grazing Cornstalks – Do you have a rental agreement?

By Mary Drewnoski, UNL Beef Systems Specialist and
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Having a written agreement can help reduce miscommunication and frustration down the road.
• It ensures a better understanding by both parties.
• It serves as a reminder of the terms originally agreed upon.
• It increases the likelihood that the relationship will continue in future years.

When it comes to rental agreements for grazing corn residue, a number of questions need to be asked and answered up front to avoid disagreements later.

1. What is the latest start date that residue will be available for grazing?
• Have a written start date with an agreed upon penalty (such as an extra fee) if the corn is harvested late.
• Having this agreement in writing can keep both parties feeling okay about the outcome if weather or equipment issues delay harvest and availability of the residue.

When it comes to rental agreements for grazing corn residue, a number of questions need to be asked and answered up front to avoid disagreements later. Photo courtesy of Troy Walz.

2. What is the latest end date for removing cattle?
• A common frustration that corn farmers voice when renting out corn residue for grazing is that the cattle are not removed in a timely fashion.
• Have a written removal date with an agreed upon penalty (such as an extra fee) if cattle remain longer can keep both parties feeling okay about the outcome even if an unexpected event (such as a snow storm) keeps cattle on the land longer than planned.
• Who is responsible for gathering and removal of the cattle?

3. How will the appropriate stocking rate be determined and how will grazing be priced?
• Using the corn stalk grazing calculator (http://go.unl.edu/wgm9) to determine stocking rates is a good way to ensure proper stocking rates are utilized. It is important to utilize proper stocking rates to ensure cattle have access to adequate amounts of leaf and husk and that performance is maintained.
• Get your pricing right- by the acre OR by the head:
  ►Priced on a per acre basis. This type of arrangement is simple to administer but can have negative consequences if the start date, end date, stocking rate and adverse weather policy is not specifically spelled out. Without these items being outlined the crop producer can be exposed to the risk of over grazing and the cattle owner could be exposed to the risk of paying for something he/she can't use if adverse weather prevents grazing.
  ►Priced on a per head per day or AUM basis. With this method the cattle owner only pays for actual use. Again the start date, end date, and stocking rate need to be laid out. The duration of grazing is important for the cattle producer when calculating transportation costs into the cost of feeding the cow. The crop producer is accepting the financial risk that the grazing resource may not produce the income they anticipated if the cattle are removed early.

• The plan for heavy snow or ice needs to be included in the pricing agreement, including the emergency feed source and who is responsible for providing it.
• The payment schedule and method should also be agreed upon.

4. Other things that should be outlined:
• Is there a fence present? If not who is responsible for building the fence? Who is responsible for maintaining fences?
• Is there a reliable water source for the cattle? Who is responsible for providing water and maintaining water during grazing (including breaking ice)?
• Who is responsible for the daily care of the cattle? Inventory counts? Providing minerals and salt? Monitoring animal health? How will treating sick cattle be handled? Will the cattle be commingled with other cattle?
• Who is liable for the cattle getting out? Who is responsible for gathering the cattle if they get out?
• Is the cattle owner required to carry liability insurance for potential damage caused by the cattle? What, if any, indemnification responsibilities does the cattle owner have to the crop farmer for damage caused by the cattle?

This resource is meant to provide a list of questions and issues to consider in drafting a lease agreement for grazing corn residue. Obtaining legal advice from a licensed attorney is encouraged in developing the actual agreement.

Propane Availability Forecast

Propane tanks ready for filling at a local facility. (Photo by John Nuckolls, FarmPropane.com)

Are hurricanes Harvey or Irma likely to affect propane availability for farmers and rural Nebraska homeowners for winter 2017-18? Not in the long run as propane availability is good, said Gregg Walker, director of communications for the Propane Education and Research Council. Hurricane Harvey delayed exports from Texas ports for a few days and may have hampered processing at some facilities, but “we make more than enough propane to meet US supply,” Walker said.

He does encourage rural users to work with local suppliers to order propane early to guarantee they’ll have what they need when they need it this winter. “Nebraska is fairly close to a major distribution center at Conway, Kansas, which puts Nebraska markets in a good position,” Walker said; however, propane competes for space with other energy commodities in the transportation system and sometimes there just aren’t enough rail cars or trucks available to get it where it needs to go on a short deadline. Ordering early helps everyone in the supply chain better identify and plan for domestic need and respond to potential export sales.

“The US produces more propane than any other country in the world and is the world’s largest exporter,” he said. That means that even if the US were to have a mild winter, if Europe had an unusually long and bitterly cold winter, export needs would increase, affecting supplies. Growers may still remember 2013-14 when there was a high demand for grain drying, followed by a tough winter. As the “Polar Vortex” dipped down, the US sustained record lows over an extended time, increasing propane needs for many rural Americans, sometimes beyond normal expectations.

Rural users can take steps to help ensure they have a ready supply when they need it, just as they would with other farm inputs, Walker said. He recommends users establish a good relationship with their local supplier and make plans with them soon regarding winter propane needs and purchases.

While growers may take a risk that the price of propane moves higher or lower after the price is contracted, setting the price early can help with budgeting and provide peace of mind that the fuel will be available when needed, said Anthony Barrett, farm financial consultant at Nebraska Farm Business Inc. Growers purchasing inputs in the fall also may be able to lock in cash discounts.

Source: Cropwatch.unl.edu

Equipment Adjustments for Harvesting Soybeans at 13%-15% Moisture

Everyone knows it is impossible to harvest all your soybeans at exactly 13%, but that should be your goal to optimize potential income. If you're harvesting soybeans at 14%-15% moisture and pods are mature and stems are still green, consider the following equipment recommendations to help assure a good harvest.

1. **When harvesting tough or green stems, make combine adjustments and operate at slower ground speeds.** Make combine adjustments several times a day to match conditions as they change. The following combine adjustments are suggested when harvesting higher moisture soybeans or soybeans with green stems:
   - **To increase "grip" on the green stems** to pull them through the combine, replace rounded or worn parts in the thresher, especially worn feeder house chains and rasp bars.
   - **Increase cylinder/rotor speed** to make threshing more aggressive to break open green pods and pull the green material through. Do not close down concave clearance as that reduces room for the green materials to pass through the thresher.
   - **Insert filler plates or wires in the front portion of the concave** to keep the green pods in the cylinder/rotor chamber longer for better threshing. If not, the pods will fall through to the sieves unopened. Consider closing down the top sieve slightly to send the green pods out the back if you are not threshing them properly.
   - **Increase fan speed** as the green stems are heavier and need more airflow to keep them suspended above the sieves to allow for proper cleaning and to blow the green leaves out.
   - **Close down the lower sieve slightly** to keep green pods out of the grain tank and send them back to the cylinder/rotor for rethreshing.
   - **Install disrupter bars on rotary combines** to improve green stem flow through the rotor and to reduce "roping." On some rotary combines, you can retard the material flow by adjusting the vanes on the rotor cage or by installing reverser rasp bars to keep the material in the rotor longer to allow more time for threshing and separating.
   - **Consider adding an air reel to the head** to have airflow help feed the soybeans into the combine and reduce bunch feeding. More uniform feeding will improve threshing.
2. **Begin harvesting at 14% or 15% moisture.** What appears to be wet or green from the road may be dry enough to harvest. Try harvesting when some of the leaves are still on the plant as the beans may be drier than you think. Soybeans are fully mature when 95% of the pods are at their mature tan color. When storing the first harvested, wetter beans on-farm, running the aeration fan will help drive moisture from the wetter beans upward to help rehydrate any dry beans in the top of the bin.
3. **Harvest under optimum conditions.** Moisture content can increase by several points with an overnight dew or it can decrease by several points during a day with low humidity and windy conditions. Avoid harvesting when beans are driest, such as on hot afternoons, to maintain moisture and reduce shattering losses. Harvesting immediately after a rain, if field conditions allow, will result in higher moisture contents. However, several wetting and drying cycles from rain events will make the soybeans more susceptible to shatter losses from pods splitting open.
4. **Avoid harvest losses from shattering by harvesting before the beans become overly dry.** Four to five beans on the ground per square foot can add up to one bushel per acre loss. Many times, the dock for delivering beans over 13% moisture content may be less the shatter losses from harvesting overly dry soybeans.
5. **If there are green leaves and green pods in the grain, they are considered foreign matter at the marketplace which can result in dockage.** If placed in on-farm storage, they can cause challenges in a grain bin at the edges. Avoid dockage and spoilage by doing the following:
   - **Reset the combine** as outlined above to provide a cleaner harvest.
   - **Use a grain cleaner** to remove the foreign matter before marketing or storage.
   - **Use a grain spreader** when putting beans into storage to better distribute any foreign matter.
   - **In storage, operate the aeration fan to dry the leaves and green pods** to a safe storage moisture content. The pods and green beans will dry quickly and help rehydrate any overly dry beans. The fans need to be operated for temperature management anyway.
6. **Don't place "all of your eggs in one basket" when it comes to selecting the maturity of soybean seed at planting time.** Select your varieties and schedule your planting to spread out plant maturity and harvest. Plant your early maturing varieties first.

Source: Cropwatch.unl.edu

By the Numbers: Who's Paying How Much in Cash Rent?

This week the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service released its county level statistics on cash rental rates for irrigated and non-irrigated cropland and pastureland. Available in table and map form (*Figures 1-3*), the Nebraska rates are based on a random sample of nearly 16,000 producers who were surveyed from March through June.

In Nebraska the highest range of irrigated cash rental rates was from $282 in Knox County to $312 in Dixon County. The next highest range was from $236 in Kearney County to $278 in Seward County.

The highest level of non-irrigated cash rental rates—all in eastern Nebraska—ranged from $188 in Pierce and Butler counties to $266 in Dakota County.

The highest range of pasture cash rental rates was from $56 in Platte County to $73 in Pierce County.

The information is based on surveys conducted with Nebraska farmers and ranchers during the first half of 2017.

"These rents represent an average of all rates reported for a county, which means our data set included recently negotiated rents and those that may not have been updated for some time," notes Nick Streff, deputy regional director for the Northern Plains Regional Field Office in Lincoln. "These rental rates will not always represent the current market rate for a given county."

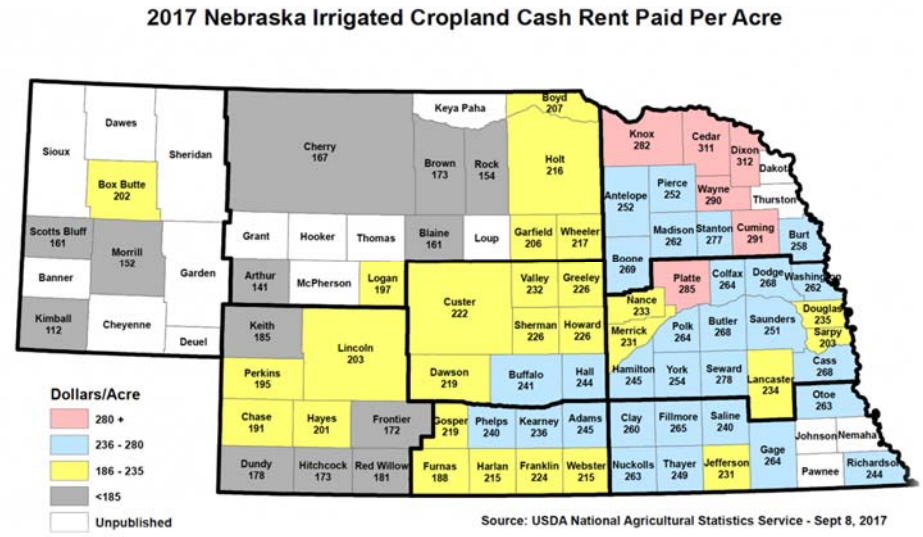

Figure 1. Nebraska irrigated cropland cash rent paid per acre in 2017.

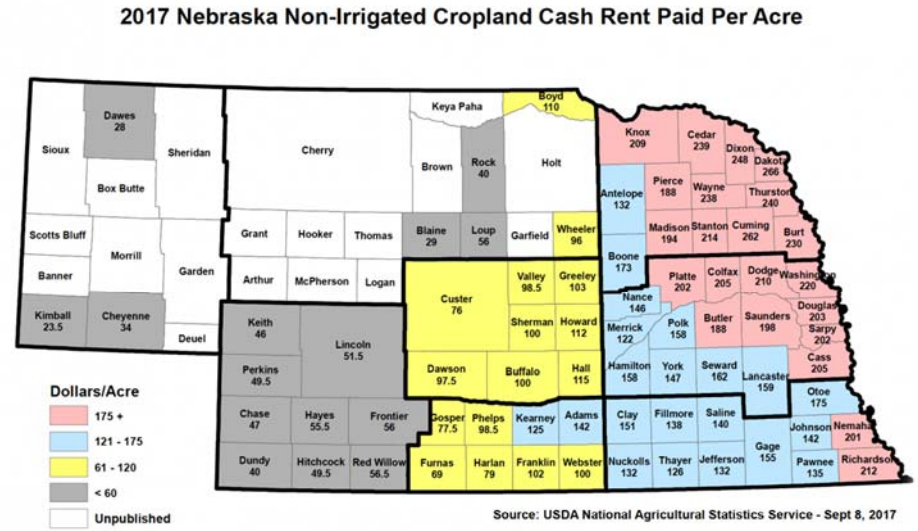

Figure 2. Nebraska non-irrigated cropland cash rent paid per acre in 2017.

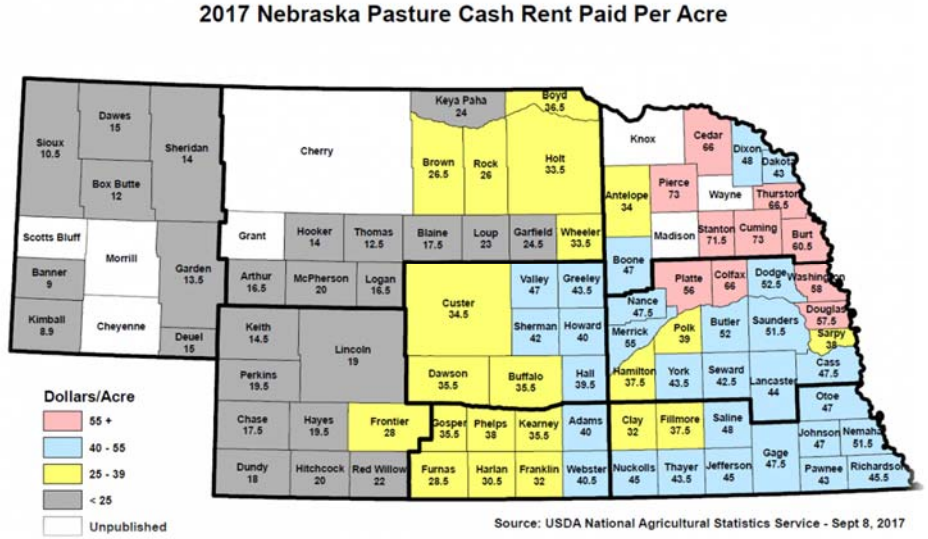

Figure 3. Nebraska pasture cash rent paid per acre in 2017.

Jim Jansen, Nebraska Extension agricultural economist, noted that variability in crop and livestock prices appears to be influencing cash rental rates as well as ag land values. Counties where there are wide production swings from year to year are more apt to have lower cash rental rates due to inconsistent income potential.

The rate growers are willing to pay in rent appears to relate to the land's income-earning potential. If commodity or livestock prices drop, rental rates tend to follow suit, Jansen said.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Department of Agricultural Economics also tracks agland cash rental rates in Nebraska and released its most recent data earlier this year in the 2017 Nebraska Farm Real Estate Report. Its report is based on surveys made in early 2017. Rental rates published in 2017 declined an average of about 5% to 10% for the second consecutive year, with several rates dropping by more than 10%.

Source: http://cropwatch.unl.edu/2017/usda-nass-numbers-whos-paying-how-much-cash-rents

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White Mold More Common This Year in Soybeans

Loren Giesler - Extension Plant Pathologist

Once again we are seeing a lot of white mold in soybeans. White mold or Sclerotinia Stem Rot is a disease that can be identified now, but management needs to have occurred previously, during bloom.

One of the main problems with white mold management is that the disease starts earlier in the season during flowering. The actual infection occurs on the senescing flower which the fungus uses as a food source. All infections in soybean typically start at a node. You can even tell when the infection occurred based on how high up the plant the stem lesions and fungal growth are. This year's cool wet conditions during flowering were favorable for infection. More cool temperatures after infection were favorable for more growth of the fungus.

Symptoms at this point in soybean development will be individual or small pockets of dead or dying plants. Upon close inspection you will see a white cottony fungal growth on the stems which may also include dark black bodies (sclerotia) of the fungus on the stems. Stems of dead plants will be very light (bleached) in color and when dead stems are split, you will often see the sclerotia of the fungus inside. The optimum temperature for growth of the fungus is 75°F. If temperatures move into the 90s, the disease will not spread much.

Some parameters to consider for your next soybean crop:
Row spacing: Narrow rows favor early canopy which creates an environment conducive for infection. In some areas more disease is being observed in narrow rows.
Fungicides: It's too late now for rescue treatments. Fungicide applications need to be applied during flowering to have any effect on this disease.
Irrigation: Altering your irrigation at this time will add more stress to the crop as most fields are at peak water use. Any change in irrigation should have been done during flowering, if at all possible.

Diagnosis and Plant Disease Information: As with any disease, correct diagnosis is critical to proper management. If you are uncertain of the cause of damage in your field, I encourage you to have it identified at the University of Nebraska Plant and Pest Diagnostic Clinic**.**