

NEWS COLUMN

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Grazing Corn Stalks

Grazing corn stalks as a way to save on fall and winter feed costs is the topic of a publication from South Dakota State University Cooperative Extension.

SDSU Extension Extra 2044, "Grazing Corn Stalks," is available through county Extension offices. Or find it online at

http://pubstorage.sdstate.edu/AgBio_Publications/articles/ExEx2044.pdf.

Written by SDSU Extension Beef Specialist Cody Wright and former SDSU Extension Beef Feedlot Specialist Kent Tjardes, the publication explores ways to include corn stalks while assuring that cattle meet their nutritional needs.

Under most conditions, one acre of corn residue can provide 30 to 45 days of grazing for a 1,200 pound pregnant cow.

The nutritional quality of grazed corn residue is quite high early in the grazing period, at approximately 70 percent total digestible nutrients (TDN) and 8 percent crude protein. It then gradually decreases over time to approximately 40 percent TDN and 5 percent crude protein. This reduction is a result of cattle selecting the highest quality feeds first and a weathering, or leaching, of nutrients from the residue over time. Cattle will first consume any grain that remains in the field. Then they will shift their preference to leaves and husks and finally to cobs and stalks.

The publication deals with topics such as forage quality and quantity; protein supplementation; genetically modified corn; concerns such as bloat; acidosis and founder; and management challenges such as fencing and water.