

Ag Radio Programs for November 18 - 24, 2019

Cold Soils Continued

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. To say that it got cold a week ago is an understatement! Last Tuesday's morning low of 5 was a record setter. While we've had temperatures that cold, and colder, before, this one concerned me because the surface soil is dry right now. Dry soil heats and cools faster than moist soil because of the tempering effect of water. There are two kinds of winter freeze damage that we can have. Frost heaving is most likely to happen to plants like alfalfa and usually takes a winter of freeze thaw cycles to happen. The other though is freeze drying which can happen in just one cold weather event. Cold air dries out small plants or plants that hadn't acclimated yet. It can also happen on landscape plants. The late October cold spell certainly helped to start getting plants acclimated but for now, all we can do is wait until spring to see. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Forage Value of Crop Residue

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I have often felt that cattle producers have not utilized crop stover enough, corn and sorghum stalks particularly. There are some misconceptions about grazing residue and the next couple of days I'll talk about grazing stalks. When cows graze stalks they do so selectively. They start with any leftover grain first, then leaves and husks and lastly stalks. Corn leaves run about 5 to 6% crude protein and 51 to 52% TDN. Sorghum leaves, amazingly, run 8 to 11% protein and 53 to 57% TDN. Corn residue is also more fragile and should be grazed first. Corn stalks will run 3.3 to 4.6% crude protein. Filler but not much food value and only 41 to 45% TDN. Sorghum stalks run 5.3 to 5.9% protein and 49 to 52% TDN. Regardless, both can provide quite a few weeks of carrying capacity for spring calving cows in good body condition. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Concerns about Grazing Crop

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. The two most common negative things I hear about grazing residue is compaction and nutrient removal. Compaction can occur especially in wet years and around water or mineral/protein sources. I will agree that if the field is wet and not frozen, don't graze. An interesting long term grazing study done in Nebraska showed no significant compaction and an increase in crop yield. Nutrient removal from grazing is nominal. Crop residue is so low in phosphorus that we normally have to supply a free choice mineral. Many times, since leaves blow off fields and manure doesn't, grazing will increase phosphorus levels. Nitrogen removal, after accounting for nutrient cycling via manure, is generally going to be just a pound or two per acre. Concerns about nutrient removal should not be a reason not to graze residue. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Duration of Grazing Corn and Sorghum Stalks

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. The last of my series of crop stover grazing comes down to how long can I graze the stalks. The cows will do a pretty good job of telling you when it's time to go so monitor how they are behaving as well as changes in body condition score. For planning purposes with corn stalks divide the crop yield by 3.5 to get grazing days for a 1200 pound cow per acre. If your corn crop this year made 140 bushels per acre then in theory you can graze that one cow on one acre for 40 days. Obviously the closer she gets to calving her nutritional needs will increase so keep that in mind for possible supplemental feeding. Since corn and sorghum have a similar harvest index you can use the same 3.5 factor for sorghum fields. A 1200 pound cow on a field that grew 90 bushel sorghum should get by for 25 days on one acre. That residue has great value! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Lease Communication is Crucial

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I say it often and loudly that the biggest problem in maintaining good leases is lack of communication between the landlord and tenant. While it is especially important with crop share leases, it's still important in cash leases for the landlord and tenant to be communicating regularly. And then it's essential that both parties actually be TALKING about how they honestly feel about the lease. But you know what? That's hard. Landlords will say everything is fine when it isn't because they don't want the confrontation that might happen. Tenants are afraid to approach the landlord about changing potentially inequitable lease terms because they may lose the lease. So everyone sits there and stew and frets and nothing changes. Sometimes you just have to walk away from a lease but please, let's do some talking first! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.