K·STATE Research and Extension | Meadowlark District

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Utilizing Crop Residues

Based on the corn acres in Kansas, it is estimated the crop produces close to 200,000 tons of residue annually. Not all of it is usable, but if you're trying to stretch the hay pile and are considering utilization of crop residue, there are a few things to think through as you do.

First, check for grain piles. Modern equipment doesn't usually leave much, but if piles remain, it's a good idea to clean them up to avoid intake issues from single feeding consumption.

Early season corn stalk grazing might provide you a product with a crude protein in the six and a half percent range, while later grazing will be closer to three and a half. Energy value declines aren't as significant, but *will* drop over time. Adjust supplement programs accordingly based on cow condition and stage of growth.

General cattle grazing will typically result in removal of about 15 percent of the residue (leaves and husk). Greater consumption levels can be attained if animals are forced to, but the goal should be to leave at least 50 percent of the total residue on the field. One general rule of thumb used is to divide yield by three and a half to get grazing days for a 1200-pound cow. Adjust days if animals are heavier/lactating due to increased consumption.

Compaction could be a concern, but is generally concentrated in paths to and from water sources or is shallow in nature. Compaction research varies, so understanding soil type, soil moisture, and timing of grazing are key. Bottom line: compaction will likely be light and easily remedied with light tillage if it does occur. To avoid, remove cattle if possible when the field is wet and not frozen or when other significant compaction factors are present.

Nutrient removal from grazing is fairly low. Dry cows will likely only remove a couple of pounds of nitrogen per acre along with a few other nutrients and some recycling will likely occur when grazed that does not as rapidly occur if residue is left completely on the soil surface.

Poinsettia Care

Tis the season for poinsettias. This popular Christmas season plant can be a little finicky, but with a little attention, can remain an attractive decoration for a long time.

Start by providing an appropriate temperature environment. Pick a sunny window or the brightest area of the room. Daytime temperature should be 65 to 75 degrees F. Temperatures above 75 tend to shorten bloom life. Nighttime temperatures should be between 60 and 65 degrees at night to prevent root rots. Keep plants from touching cold window panes and away from drafty windows at night or draw drapes between them to avoid damage from the cold.

Soil moisture is also important. Poinsettias don't like wet feet on one hand, or wilting on the other. If allowed to wilt, the plant will likely drop leaves, so avoid moisture extremes. Check potting soil daily by sticking your finger about one-half inch deep into the soil. If it is dry, the plant needs water. Water the plant with lukewarm water until some runs out of the drainage hole, then discard the drainage water.

Worried about the poisonous characteristics of poinsettias? While there can be allergic reactions to the plant's milky sap, there has never been a recorded case of poisoning. The plant doesn't contain the toxin other members of the Euphorbia genus do, and poinsettia has been found to produce either no effect (orally or topically) or occasional cases of vomiting.