



Species

# Annual and Alternative Species Grazing Maize (Corn)

## Illinois

**What** Grazing standing corn as a winter-feed source for beef cows. Grazing standing corn is becoming a viable option where pasture acres are limited and the cattle need a higher energy feed to carry them through the demanding winter months.

**Why** Corn is a readily available food source for beef cows on most Midwestern farms. The research and field trials are taking place from Ohio to Nebraska, in the Corn Belt. If the producer watches the economics closely he can feed his cows from 50 cents to 60 cents per day. This is calculated from the estimated bushels of corn times the market value of the crop. This option also allows for a rest period for the grasses that can be stockpiled for winter grazing, such as, tall fescue. It is easier for most cattlemen to reduce the costs than raise the production levels.

**How** First a producer must look at the best corn hybrids for grazing, if that is the goal. Most seed corn companies have specific hybrids that are recommended for silage. These hybrids tend to have a higher leaf to stalk ratio. Also the plants will have smaller stalks, which are bred to be more digestible for silage and grazing.

There are different methods of managing your corn for grazing that can be used. One client mows a path through the field to put up the electric fences in; this allows the farmer to build the fence easier. The cows will pike up the shredded stalks and corn from under the fence, so nothing is lost anyway. Another client shells his corn and leaves every other corn head pass standing, this allows for the fence to be built in the existing shelled rows. This also allows the cows to have a wider access to more stalks in the field than corn. Most all that graze standing corn will limit the area of access to about one tenth of an acre at a time. This is done even with 90 to 100 cows. Some clients have allowed a limited access to the corn, at first, for only an hour or two at a time for the first day into each new section. This is done because the cows will usually go from ear to ear and feed first only on the grain.

**Where** For more information about grazing maize, contact your local office of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, listed in the telephone book directory under U.S. Government, or the University of Illinois Extension.

November 2000



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