



The Indiana's Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

Mission: Serve as a catalyst to focus state and local resources (people, time and finance) to promote economically viable grazing management systems through innovative education / information, research, technical, and financial programs and projects.

Some Options for Supplementing Inadequate Forage Supply

An early spring freeze and extreme dry weather this season has resulted in less than average forage production on many Indiana farms. Because of these weather-related concerns, the Indiana Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative committee is suggesting ways for livestock producers to supplement limited supplies of winter feed.

Not all of the suggested options will work for every producer but perhaps one or a combination of the options suggested will help reduce the shortage of winter feed supplies.

Haying and Grazing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres may be an option. Contact your county FSA office to see about authorized Emergency or Managed Haying and Grazing of CRP. Also talk with neighboring CRP owners about using their forage through CRP's authorized haying/grazing provisions. While this feed may not be of high forage quality, supplementing it with a small amount of energy and protein may be adequate for dry stock and pre-lactation animals.

Fallow wheat land can be an excellent location for growing late-summer forage.

Some suggestions include seeding spring oat at 2 bushels per acre along with forage turnip at 2 pounds per acre. Seeding can be done from mid-July through very early September. The forage mixture is best harvested as silage or by grazing. Because of the high quality of this feed it is suggested that it be limit fed to livestock with less nutrient requirements at a rate of one-fourth oat and turnip, and three-fourths low quality forage like corn residue. When grazed, the perfect solution would be to have an adjoining field of harvested corn or lower quality CRP forage and to strip graze the oat and turnip combination. Livestock should have access to limited amounts of the oat and turnip so they don't fail to eat the corn residue. With adequate acres this feed could be used from corn harvest until early spring. An article discussing use of spring oat as a fall and winter feed resource can be found on line at <http://www.agriculture.purdue.edu/AgAnswers/story.asp?storyID=4529>. A publication from the University of Illinois entitled "Extending Fall Grazing with Brassicas and Cereal Grain" is also available on line at <http://www.livestocktrail.uiuc.edu/pasturenet/paperDisplay.cfm?ContentID=8164>.

Other seeding options and considerations. Early fall seeding of annual ryegrass, winter wheat or winter cereal rye can produce late fall, winter and early spring feed. Refer to the labels of herbicides used in the past year or two on the acreage to be seeded to avoid carryover concerns. If this is not an option on your farm consider renting wheat land with adjoining corn residue acreage from a nearby cash grain farmer. It can improve his return per acre as well as provide you with additional low cost feed.

Cereal winter rye, winter wheat or spring oat can be broadcast into standing corn by airplane by early September with the intention of grazing the small grain forage and corn residue together. This seeding option has some risk as adequate soil moisture needs to be available for germination of the broadcasted seed and the successful establishment of the seedlings.

If fencing is a concern for grazing, consider a temporary single high-tensile 12.5 gauge electrified wire with single corner posts and small fiberglass posts to support the wire. Ensure the fencing is adequate to control livestock. Subdivide the grazable area with a poly wire and tread in posts. Consider allotting a one- to three-day supply of feed and then moving the livestock to minimize possible compaction. The fencing can be easily removed once the grazing is completed. If livestock are not familiar with electric

fence they should be properly trained by placing an electric wire across a confined area to allow them to test the single-wire system. If water is not available in the field being grazed it will need to be provided on a daily basis. Livestock water needs are less at that time of year because of cooler seasonal temperatures.

If grazing isn't an option consider harvesting corn stover behind the combine. If possible, remove the spreader-chopper from the back of the combine to make a windrow of shucks and cobs for round baling or chopping. This will be more costly than grazing but much larger acreages can be available for machine harvest. Harvest all the windrows as any left in the field will impact tillage and emergence of the following crop sown.

If applicable, ensure your activities on cropland are consistent with your USDA Program benefits requirements. Planting cover crops and other forages in rotation, implementing a managed grazing system, and/or baling residue under managed conditions should help provide long-term soil health and maintain program eligibility.

Is there easy access to Wet Distillers Grains (WDG) from ethanol processing facilities? Wet Distillers Grains usually test about 70 percent moisture and can be ensiled with corn residue to make a good source of feed for dry stock and pregnant animals. Mix at a level to keep the moisture content of the mixture over 50 percent so adequate ensiling occurs.

Adding WDG to corn silage can also extend the amount of feed available. WDG can also be fed directly to livestock as a supplemental feed. The WDG do not store very long in open air so you need lots of animals or very little WDG at a time. Knowing the sulfur content of the WDG is important as high levels of sulfur in a ration impacts the well being of the livestock being fed.

Both wet and dry distillers grains can be fed in limited quantities to livestock. Consult with a trained animal nutritionist for proper utilization of these products.

Stockpiling pasture growth for late-autumn use. If adequate rainfall begins soon, there is still opportunity to stockpile cool-season pasture growth in the late summer and early fall. Stockpiling refers to growth of forage in some paddocks of a rotational grazing system in the late summer and early fall and defers the grazing of the forage until mid-to-late fall. The addition of 50 lbs. of N per acre by mid-August in grass-dominant paddocks to be stockpiled should be considered to produce greater forage yield.

Drought-damaged corn harvested as silage. Another forage resource that should be considered is corn that was damaged by dry weather and will not produce an economic grain yield. The whole plant can be harvested as silage and fed as a component of the livestock ration. Contact the Farm Service Agency and crop insurance personnel to see what requirements need to be considered before silage harvest begins. Nitrate level in drought-damaged corn is an issue but nitrate remaining in the forage is reduced after ensiling. Analysis of the silage for nitrate level by a feed testing laboratory will help to determine the upper limit that silage that can be fed so nitrate toxicity will not occur.

Contact your Purdue Extension Educator for additional suggestions on extending the supply of winter feed. The Indiana Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative committee is planning an early winter tour around the state to share examples of some of these feeding options. Watch for announcements for these upcoming events.