

## Weekly Article

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### Utilizing Crop Residues to produce top quality Feeder Calves

Hello, my Name is Richard Purdin with OSU Extension, Ag and Natural Resource Educator and Community Development Educator for Adams County. I hope to better inform local producers and the public of the latest news in the world of agriculture. Midway through October and I have already put the coveralls and toboggan to good use! Cool and dry has been the name of the game for the last 24 days. According to my records, the county as a whole has not seen any more than .5 inches of rain since September 24<sup>th</sup>. The air temperature has run about 2 degrees cooler than normal and looking ahead the trend might continue well into the end of the year. With all that said, corn and soybean harvest is continuing on schedule or slightly ahead of schedule. As I make my rounds across the county and talking to many producers, soybeans harvest has been moving fast but the moisture levels are falling as low as 9% creating challenges with shatter loss at the grain head. Corn continues to dry in the field and looking at some corn at my own farm, moisture levels have dropped close to ½ points per day reaching the 18% level. Test weights in soybeans have been strong ranging from 57-59 lbs. but the corn has been all over the board with reports as high as 60 and low as 53 lbs./bushel. Many livestock producers are expressing concern with forage availability going into winter as pastures turn into dirt lots and hay feeding has become a daily chore! Creeks and smaller springs have even stopped flowing and even the Ohio river is dropping to its lowest level for the year. There are a lot of things that keep this Ag Extension Educator up at night, but the main one currently is how long will this pattern last and until it does break? How can livestock producers manage their herds without breaking the bank and emptying the hay barn before Christmas!

Feeder calf market remain strong and beef demand locally and nationally continue to be strong. One remaining theme in the market is the demand for heavier weight calves as feedlots are being faced with very high-priced feed cost which can eat as much as 55% of their profits. With that demand comes advantages to retaining those feeder calves and feeding them up to the 600 lbs. weight or more. The problem is that cost money and dry conditions are not helping the feed supply issue. This is where utilizing lower quality forage and or crop residues such as corn stalks could be a good option. Here are just a few things to think when feeding crop residues or poor-quality forage.

1. Know your goals- crop residues such as corn stalks are not known for their quality but rather as a filler/bedding, expecting 3 lbs. of gain a day is probable not realistic (unless the combine was not adjusted well, and grain loss was high). Setting marketing goals should account for slower rate of gain somewhere between 1.5-2 lbs./day, this can be enhanced with protein supplements but with a cost.
2. Testing can be helpful- I often preach about testing your soil so you don't waist money on fertilizer, the same can be said for forages. If you are unsure if your forage should be kept for your winter feeding or fed to calves, collecting a forage feed sample can help you better make that decision. For corn stover rough nutrient estimates of 5% crude protein, 49% total digestible nutrients .58Mcal/lb. of net energy for gain, 7% lignin, 2.1% fat and 60% Neutral and Acid Detergent fiber can be expected.
3. Consider Non-Structural Carbohydrates- Growing calves are at their peak need for metabolizable protein. Supplementing with a high digestible nonstructural carbohydrate such as soyhull pellets, corn gluten pellet, or cotton seed meal can enhance animal performance.
4. Feed grade urea can improve fiber digestibility- Crop residues and poor overmature forages are great fillers that are high in fiber, the problem is that they are not digestible. Feeding 1% or less feed grade urea in the animal's ration can greatly improve digestibility.
5. Minerals are a must- Crop residues and poor-quality forages are not only poor digestion they are very low in vitamins and minerals. Selenium should be a supplemented at levels of 3ppm and free choice potassium salt will improve feed intake and water consumption.
6. Call the vet- If you don't have a relationship with a veterinarian this is a better time as any to start one! Discuss vaccination programs and feeding management options and don't be afraid to test their knowledge, they do appreciate it.

**Ag Educator Words of encouragement** – “Our farmers deserve praise not condemnation; and their efficiency should be cause for gratitude, not something for which they are penalized” - **President John F. Kennedy**