

By Bruce Anderson

UNL Extension Forage Specialist

Did early fall snows prevent you

from harvesting all your corn? Instead of waiting for snow to melt and then the ground to either freeze or dry out, consider grazing. More in a moment.

Do you have strips of corn or entire corn fields still standing and unharvested due to snow last fall? Instead of waiting to combine your corn, maybe there's a better choice –grazing.

After all, snow must melt and then the ground freeze or dry up before you can combine. Cattle can get in to graze much earlier than large equipment. Another advantage of grazing might include the ability of cattle to harvest ears that have dropped to the ground.

How you go about grazing your standing corn might take a little forethought, though.

Over half of what the animals eat is going to be grain so they may need to be fed some corn before grazing to adapt them to a higher grain diet. You also need to limit the amount of area the animals have access to so they don't just run wild – knocking down, trampling in, and wasting much of this valuable feed.

Limiting the area isn't as difficult as it might sound. It just involves some pretty intense daily strip grazing. Use electric fences that you reposition every day to allocate only one days worth of feed at a time. To determine how much area to provide on a daily basis, begin by estimating your corn grain yield. Each bushel of grain you provide should support about three cows for one day, considering that they also can eat much of the corn forage but will have some waste. Give

them the estimated area to start, then give a little more or a little less each day depending on how well they used the previous day's allocation.

Grazing standing corn—it's one way to finish harvest early so preparation for next year's crop can begin.