

A common practice for many producers is to graze cornstalks in the fall and feed hay in the winter and spring until it's time to go out to grass again. But is this traditional method of feeding going to be the best option this year? A feature article in the September Nebraska Cattleman magazine addresses this topic.

Increased corn production may lead one to conclude there will be increased cornstalks in the state.

According to Aaron Stalker, University of Nebraska, West Central Research and Extension Center, North Platte, "There is an excess of cornstalks in Nebraska."

The issue, however, is getting the cattle to the stalks. "Generally, the stalks are in the Platte River Valley—the south and east parts of the state; and the majority of the cow herd is in the Sandhills—the north and west parts of the state," he explains.

Further, because there is little pasture around all those cornfields, there are also fewer cattle close by to utilize cornstalks.

Bruce Anderson, Ph.D., University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) Professor of Agronomy and Extension Forage Specialist, agrees that with more corn acres there are potentially more stalks. But, he warns, "With high grain prices, availability might be reduced as grain producers avoid renting stalk land due to desire for fall field work."

That leaves producers with a decision to make about their stock options.

The article looks at four options: Leasing for grazing, Baling, Stockpiling grass, and Supplementing while grazing stalks.

With less acres in hay production, Anderson sees near term economics making row crops look more attractive than hay for most growers, especially those without livestock.

"From a longer-term hay perspective, these acres rarely return to hay production, so regardless of where grain prices go, hay acres and supplies are likely to be lower for many years compared to recent production levels," he explains.

This year, both Anderson and Stalker believe hay availability is likely to be markedly lower due to fewer acres and the southern drought reducing local supplies. While it isn't creating a shortage in Nebraska yet, "It is increasing demand," Stalker says

In addition, the magazine includes these other features: The last U.S. Cavalry horse was a Nebraska native. Highlighting a recipient of the National Beef Backer award, Troy and Stacy Hadrick put their actions and voices to work for agriculture, Saunders County tour highlights entrepreneurs and creativity, In and Out of the Showring—using livestock to raise youth, U.S. Meat Export Federation Q&A, Veterinary Quality Assurance promoting healthy, humanely treated calves

There are more NC in Action items than could be printed in the magazine, so the others are on the Nebraska Cattlemen's web site. The entire magazine is online at www.nebraskacattlemen.org, just click on the icon at the bottom of the home page.