



NUTRITION NOTES

Innovation + Research from Kent Nutrition Group

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GRAZING BROOD COWS ON CORN STALKS WITH HIGH LEVELS OF DOWN CORN

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Producers looking for a safe way to graze brood cows on stalk fields with a high percentage of down stalks have been ringing the phone off the hook the last couple weeks. Unfortunately, there is NO SAFE, guaranteed way to turn cows onto stalk fields that have 20-60 bushels of corn on the ground. Granted, the corn needs to be “harvested” and processed by the cow, so that does buy some time as far as amount of starch introduced to the rumen is concerned. However, even at 20 bushels/acre, that’s over 1100 pounds of shelled corn equivalent. So, you would have to turn out 100 cows per acre to have an average intake of 11 pounds/head.

Each producer is AT THEIR OWN RISK, grazing cows on fields like this. Still, there are some things to keep in mind to help mitigate the situation.

- Be sure cows are up to date on Clostridial vaccine.
- Check for areas where the concentration of corn may be particularly high and either avoid it or figure out a way to pick some of it up.
- Ideally, windrow and round bale as much of the corn as you can. Then re-evaluate available corn afterwards.
- Fill cows up with hay before turning out.
- Check cows frequently, especially the first week
- Fence off small paddocks so you can run the 100-plus cows per acre if needed.
- Limit the time cows are in the field per day. Especially the first week or so.
- Be sure an adequate water source is fairly close by. Excess starch intake with water deprivation will make bloat problems worse.
- Continue to offer GOOD-quality grass or alfalfa hay while they are grazing that field.
- Offer a lick tub (Kent EnergiLass®).
- Many are going to offer bicarb, but bicarb is NOT a bulletproof vest. It equalizes rumen pH as a buffer, but does not keep cattle from getting enterotoxemia. AND remember that over-consumption of bicarb will actually enhance the probability of bloat. It’s OK to use Kent Rumen Buff™, but monitor intake.

There are a number of other factors of which to be cautious, but these are some which producers must safeguard against to avoid disaster.