

## **ASK THE AG TEAM, for the week of January 27, 2008**

Corn stalks as forage –by Wayne Flanary, Agronomy Specialist, University of Missouri Extension, Holt County

Livestock producers have increased feed costs as grain crops and forage prices have increased. Our three regional livestock specialists, Shawn Deering located at Albany; Jim Humphrey, Savannah and Amie Schleicher, Rockport have been looking at how to utilize ethanol by-products. One alternative they are suggesting is the use of corn stalks as a feed with ethanol by-products.

Growers are concerned about the amount of nutrients that are removed when corn stalks are baled or harvested from the field. Corn stalks on a per ton basis remove about six pounds of phosphate and about twenty four pounds of potassium. This is in addition to crop removal from harvesting corn grain.

Soils buffer the changes in soil test levels so the removal is not readily observed from soil tests if taken yearly. However, if one would remove high yields of corn stalks over a long period of time, you would see nutrient levels measured by soil tests decline.

Using corn stalks as a resource is a good alternative if you keep at least some residues in place on highly erodible land or choose fields that are level. Next, rotate fields that you harvest stalks from. This will prevent quick drawdown of soil test nutrient levels.

For more information, contact Wayne Flanary, Regional Agronomist, University of Missouri Extension at 660-446-3724.

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Corn yields continue to increase –by Wayne Flanary, Agronomy Specialist, University of Missouri Extension, Holt County

This past week, Dr. Bill Wiebold, University of Missouri Extension State Crop Specialist, showed corn yield data over decades of corn research how corn yields have increased. The data showed that the genetics that increased yield were from increased population and ability to handle stress.

The data he showed was very interesting in that corn breeders over time have spent time managing crop stresses and continuing to add traits that allow more plants per acre.

Those who are promoting biotechnology have given growers the impression that we will reach very high corn yields in the future. We may very well. But the data from this research indicates yield increases will be from genetic packages such as drought tolerance.

One part of his data showed corn planted at a very low plant population. This planting contained different hybrids from each decade and then measured for yield. The yields at this low population stayed the same and did not increase across decades of time. If we had been changing the genetics of yield, the data would have showed a yield increase over time with better genetics.

For more information, contact Wayne Flanary, Regional Agronomist, University of Missouri Extension at 660-446-3724.