

FORAGER



Agronomics with livestock in mind!



IN THE FIELD – Replanting Corn

With cold temperatures and the wet weather through much of the eastern United States corn planting has been a struggle. Many acres have not been planted, and the ones that have are looking poor. Replanting is an option for fields that have significant stand loss. Replanting these acres into other crops may be an option, but some key precautions need to be considered before doing this.

- Evaluate all herbicides and insecticides applied, and determine any carry over potentials.
- Identify yield potential of the current stand, compared with the yield potential of a late-planted stand when determining whether to replant.

Switching acres to soybeans or sorghum-sudangrass are options if they fit into the operations feed needs.

Making the Most out of Breaks in the Weather

Getting field work done in many areas of the country has been challenging. Time available for planting and harvesting this spring has literally been hours rather than days. The next two weeks are critical for finishing corn planting and salvaging as much quality from first cutting as possible. When the sun does shine again, making the most of every minute will be critical:

- Plant corn using no-till or minimum-till practices to save time
- Determine if changing your herbicide program will allow you to push application time back, and harvest first cutting earlier as a result
- Be flexible and plant or harvest fields in whatever order they are fit
- Hire extra help, or have custom operators do some
- Rent or try out additional equipment

With low milk prices some of these options may not seem reasonable, but is mother nature going to give you a choice?

Wet haylage? Watch for clostridial fermentation

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With the amount and frequency of rain we received during the first crop harvest season, it's likely that more than one load went into storage at a higher moisture content than desired. This can be a cause for concern. In alfalfa silage that is less than 30 percent dry matter, clostridial fermentation can occur. Clostridia are anaerobic (no oxygen required) bacteria that convert forage sugars and organic acids into butyric acid, carbon dioxide, and hydrogen gas. The result is excessive dry matter and energy losses in a silage with a high pH (typically over 5.0). After fermentation, the silage is easily recognizable by its rancid milk or sour odor.

What are the consequences of feeding clostridial silage?

- The feeding value of silage that has undergone clostridial fermentation is greatly reduced. The high butyric acid level can be harmful when fed to transition cows as it can lead to subclinical or clinical ketosis. Clostridia also degrade proteins, releasing ammonia and amines. They also produce high levels of acetic acid. Normally, we like to see a lactic acid to acetic acid ration of at least 3:1. That won't be the case with clostridial silage.
- Some forage testing labs offer a fermentation profile test. It provides the levels of volatile fatty acids (lactic, acetic, butyric, and propionic acids), ammonia, nitrogen, crude protein, and pH. This can be a good tool to assess silage quality.