

# FORAGER



*Agronomics with livestock in mind!*



## In the Field –MID-LATE SEASON CORN PLANTING CONSIDERATIONS

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Our full season corn planting is progressing well except on the wet soils in some regions. We are rapidly moving into the planned double crop and later planted corn scenarios. These plantings present several challenges/opportunities that producers and their advisors should consider. First, be careful not to plant late corn in soils that are too wet. You might get away with this in April, when cool temperatures and moist conditions can help alleviate the effects of sidewall compaction, but now there is significant risk for high temperatures to bake the sidewall into a zone impenetrable to the roots of a rapidly growing seedling. Also, consider Bt hybrids for these later plantings. Late-planted fields are often where we see the most consistent and severe European corn borer infestations and resulting losses. If you are following corn where rootworms may be a problem, make sure you use some protection against this pest. The rootworm hatch could coincide with the early development of late planted corn and damage could be severe.

Consider your hybrid maturity. In most places you can still plant all but the fullest season hybrids for your area until May 25th or so. Then you should think about the end use of the crop in regards to your hybrid maturity. These double crop fields can be used to “top off” bunker or tower silos with slightly wetter silage and facilitate better packing. In this case you might not want to use much shorter season hybrids. Our bunker silo survey this year is showing the top of the silo is where we have the most challenges in achieving acceptable silage densities. You might also consider narrow row or twin row corn for the late planted fields. In a two year study in Lancaster County, PA we found the benefits from 15 compared to 30 inch rows increased from none in late April to 3 tons silage/acre (65% moisture) on June 15. Consider some of these management tactics as we finish our corn planting around the region.

## PRESERVING DRY HAY

Inconsistent weather patterns in much of the country have made making hay tricky the last two growing seasons. To avoid getting hay rained on, many producers have harvested hay at high moisture levels, resulting in hay that

heats and molds in storage. Hay stored at high moistures loses excessive dry matter as plant cells continue to respire. A rule of thumb is 1% of dry matter is lost for each point of moisture lost in storage until the hay gets to equilibrium (*Preserving Baled Hay with Organic Acids, Mike Rankin, University of Wisconsin Extension*). Excessive heating can also result in dangerous barn fires. Mold and bacteria growth from excessive moisture results in dusty, unpalatable hay that can contain toxins harmful to livestock. Dust from moldy hay may also contribute to Farmers Lung Disease.

Correct use of organic acids can preserve hay and prevent mold growth. It also enables producers to harvest hay at slightly higher moistures so that more leaves are retained at harvest. Hay should be treated when moistures are equal to or greater than 15 – 17%, and hay should never be treated or stored over 25% moisture (*Preserving Baled Hay with Organic Acids, Mike Rankin, University of Wisconsin Extension*).

Propionic acid is the most commonly used acid in hay preservatives. It is excellent for limiting yeast and mold growth. Some products contain other acids in combination to create a more effective preservative. In the past propionic acid was corrosive to machinery. Today many hay preservatives are buffered by adding compounds like ammonium hydroxide. Buffered acid products are less corrosive and preserve hay just as well as non-buffered products.

Any product that is used to treat dry hay should be labeled for dry hay. Care should be taken when using acid preservatives, as some may be by-products of industrial processes and contain high levels of chromium, cadmium, or other potentially toxic compounds. Only products formulated using virgin acids should be used. Always handle any acid safely utilizing rubber gloves, eye protection, etc.

Implementing preservation practices now will improve milk or beef production for the rest of the year. High quality forage always pays big dividends, and dry hay is no exception.