

To Chop Or Not To Chop? It's The Question For Residue Management

UNIVERSITY PARK, (Centre Co.) — Now is the time when farmers are considering options for postharvest management of leftover cornstalks and other crop residue. And the question many are asking is, "To chop or not to chop?"

Before deciding whether to chop cornstalks or leave them intact, several factors should be considered, said Lynn Hoffman, senior research associate in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

Proper management of crop

residue has become widely accepted as a means to reduce soil erosion. To keep as much residue as possible on fields, Hoffman generally recommends leaving cornstalks alone. If chopped he says, the smaller pieces may be blown or washed away by wind or rain.

But there are circumstances in which chopping may be the best option. "If you plan to use secondary tillage equipment, such as a field cultivator or harrow, after

planting in the spring, you'll probably want to chop the cornstalks," Hoffman said.

"A lot of secondary tillage tools don't have enough clearance to allow those uncut stalks to pass through without plugging up the machinery. But if the stalks won't present a problem with secondary tillage, I'd recommend you leave them alone."

If you use a corn-picker to harvest your corn, cutting the stalks also might help to distribute the

material more uniformly over the field. "But if you use a combine," said Hoffman, "it usually will shred the stalks enough to give you reasonably uniform distribution without chopping them."

Some farmers who chop their cornstalks in the fall perform some type of tillage operation to partially cover the cut stalks and keep them in place. But Hoffman says there are risks in that practice. "You have to be careful that you don't violate the conservation plan assigned to

the farm or to that particular field," he said. "You have to be aware of and follow normal erosion control measures."

Hoffman says some farmers chop cornstalks thinking that it will help control insects, such as corn borers. But he says that's not necessarily true. "We've never been able to demonstrate that chopping the stalks reduces the number of insects enough to have an effect on next year's production."

If you plan to use a no-till drill to plant alfalfa or oats in the early spring, then you are better off not cutting leftover cornstalks, according to Hoffman. "When there's still a little frost and the stalks are stuck fast to the ground, you get less plugging of the grain drill when the stalks are left intact," he said.

For additional information on managing crop residue, contact the Penn State Cooperative Extension office in your county.

ADADC Scholarships Offered To College Students

Syracuse, N.Y. — Two \$500 scholarships are available through the American Dairy Association and Dairy Council, Inc. (ADADC).

College students pursuing degrees in the dairy industry from ADADC's marketing area, including New York, northern New Jersey and northeastern Pennsylvania, are eligible.

The Leo Briggs Memorial Scholarship is available to any collegiate individual who has promoted the dairy industry by exhibiting leadership in dairy industry organizations. Founded in 1983, the scholarship was established as a tribute to Leo Briggs for his superior leadership within the dairy industry for more than 30 years.

A second \$500 scholarship, the ADADC Memorial Scholarship, is available to former dairy princesses from ADADC's marketing area. The applicant must have completed one year as a dairy princess and must be pursuing a career in dairy

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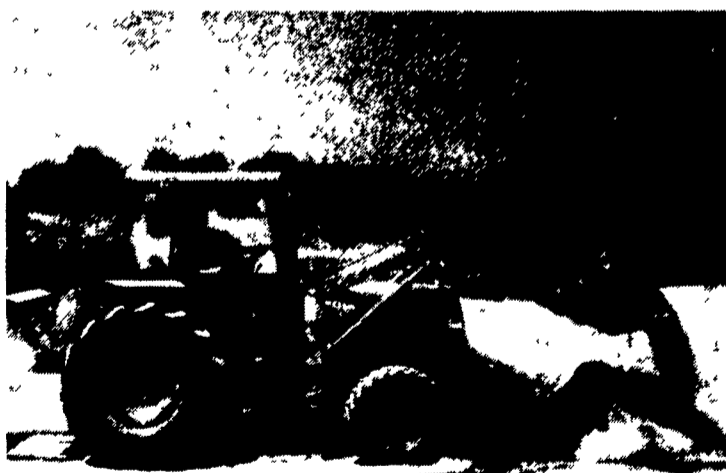
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Both college scholarships are

based on grade point average, extracurricular activities, future plans, and a 400-word essay discussing the applicant's commitment to a career in the dairy industry. Application deadline for both scholarships is Wednesday, Nov. 30.

Request applications by writing to the American Dairy Association and Dairy Council Inc., 219 South West Street, Syracuse, New York 13202-1205. For more information, contact Stephanie Meyers at (315) 472-9143.

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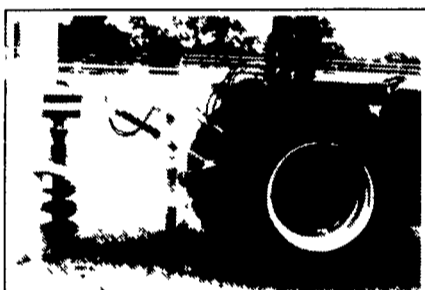
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