

Want To Graze Maize? Consider This Farmer's Experience

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BETHEL (Berks Co.) — Cattle "go for the leaves" when grazing maize, according to Brian Mohn, manager of Gilles Richard Papa Farm.

Farms such as Papa often experiment with new and inexpensive methods of feeding beef cattle. One such experiment is the use of a "grazing maize" for the 119 head of commercial Angus raised by Mohn.

While still experimental, the use of grazing maize has met with limited acceptance and can be used as a supplement to hay feeding for finishing cattle. Mohn makes use of extensive rotational grazing on the farm.

The maize, available from Baldrige Hybrids in Nebraska, is grown on about four acres of what was previously a hay field.

There are two different plantings of the maize: one on 36-inch rows and one seeded on 18-inch rows (using 36-inch row spacing doubled back) at 40,000 plants per acre.

At a field day co-sponsored by Penn State Extension last July, 30 producers and agri-industry representatives toured the 350-acre (240 tillable) Papa Farm. Mohn spoke about some of the challenges of rotational grazing (about 70 acres) and using the "grazing maize."

"You have some obstacles you have to overcome, but it looks good," he said.

Of the four acres of maize, Mohn divides the area into paddocks for grazing the cattle using five-strand polywire. The fields used for grazing corn were previously in orchard-grass, which will be rotated into small grains in the fall.

In July, Mohn opened up the gates and allowed more than 100 head of cattle to graze on a half acre of the corn. The corn, measuring about five feet high, was just at the right stage to graze — at tasseling.

"They like it!" came one response from the producer, as the black Angus cattle fed on the lush leaves.

"Yeah, they do!" said another.

Within two hours, the cattle grazed most of the leafy sur-

faces of the maize, leaving the stalk intact.

Mohn expressed some reservations about using the grazing maize.

"I was afraid of (the cattle) knocking down more corn than they utilize," Mohn said. "Whenever you pasture corn stalks in the fall, the cattle tend to romp through the whole area first and then go back and pick it clean. That's what I'm hoping will happen."

The Baldrige hybrid maize is "a little bit more reasonable than most of your hybrid corn," or traditional field corn varieties, according to Mohn.

Mohn said the soil on Papa Farm is "extremely droughty. Next week, if we have a couple of 90-degree days, you can come up and see everything brown here. We dry out real quick."

Mohn said that he used a plow-down fertilizer of about 250 pounds of nitrogen in a 20-10-10 mix. He also used a couple gallons of starter fertilizer in the solution and topped the maize with 30 units of nitrogen per acre.

Mohn indicated that the grazing maize is useful only as a supplement, and that grass is "better than this stuff, which is high in water content." But there was no evidence of bloat in the cattle because the material was not high in nitrogen.

Mena Hautau, Berks agronomy agent, said that looking at the grazing maize was useful on the soil type at Papa, considering that many similar farms in the area "took a beating" she said over last year's summer drought.

Cattle will easily chew the "nice, tender parts" of the maize, including the leaves and the tassel, said Mohn. The leaves are more soft and palatable, with less lignin. Mohn indicated there may even be more sugar content in the leaves, compared to hay.

The field will be disced in the fall and small grains will be planted.

Overall, the material can work in some operations as a supplement to rotational grazing or traditional feeding, according to experts who spoke at the field day.



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STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — PMCGA is pleased to announce continuing support for its Membership Incentive Program (MIP) that it is conducting in conjunction with a number of cooperating Pennsylvania seed companies.

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*some hybrid restrictions may apply

Hints For Freezing Corn On The Cob

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — According to the Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, if you want a taste of summer's delicious corn crop in mid-winter, this is the time to act.

Yes, you can remove the silk and freeze corn in the husks.

Some people are certain of this, but it's not the recommended procedure for long-term storage. To freeze corn on the cob, blanch small ears eight minutes, medium ears 10 minutes, and large ears 12

minutes. If you cut it from the cob, blanch it five minutes.

Or, try freezing corn (or other vegetables) by the tray pack method. Place chilled, well-drained vegetables in a single layer on shallow trays or pans, such as cookie sheets. Place in the freezer until firm. Remove and quickly fill pre-labeled bags or containers. Freeze immediately. The advantage is that food doesn't freeze in a block, so you can pour what you need from the container and put the rest back in the freezer.

