

South Dakota Rancher®

Management tips for South Dakota livestock and grassland managers

Eric M. Mousel. Range Livestock Production Specialist. SDSU. 605-688-5455

October 15, 2005

Musk Thistle Control

Nearly everybody has problems with musk thistle in their pastures and control should be a top priority for ranchers. The period of October to early-November is one of the best times to use herbicides to control musk thistle.



Photo: SDSU

If you had musk thistles this year and didn't have time to get out and control them, walk out in those infested areas this week. With the recent rains, many seedlings have probably sprouted. Most musk thistle seedlings this fall will be small, in a flat, rosette growth form, and they are very sensitive to herbicides this time of year. Spaying thistles this fall will reduce problems next year.

Using 2, 4 - D or Ally are probably your best bet for the money. However, as it gets colder, a little Banvel mixed with 2, 4 - D will result in a better kill on musk thistle or use Curtail before soils freeze.

If it gets late and you are not sure how effective herbicides will be, use Tordon 22K instead because Tordon has a lengthy soil residual that will continue to work next spring. Be sure to avoid overgrazing pastures to help grass stands crowd out thistle seedlings.



Photo: L.T. Kok

Consider thistle control this fall to make your pastures cleaner next spring.

Grazing Corn Stalks to Lower Winter Feeding Costs

With the corn harvest nearly complete in most areas, corn stalks are available for grazing and several decisions need to be made.



Photo: E. Mousel, SDSU©

quality feed can be lost in snow or mud. Leaving cattle on an entire field for a couple of months is more common, but utilization of available feed will probably be lower.

Should I supplement cattle on stalks?

Corn stalks provide some nice early gains on cattle, but later in the season, after all the “candy” has been picked through, about a half pound per day of supplemental protein will likely be necessary. Also, be sure to provide salt, calcium, phosphorous, and vitamin A free choice at all times.

Making good decisions on corn stalks can provide ranchers with some excellent, low cost feed.

Copyright ©. 2005. SDSU and Eric M. Mousel. All rights reserved.

How soon should I begin grazing stalks?

In most years corn stalks should be grazed as soon after corn harvest as possible to capture the maximum nutrient value from the stalks before they begin to degrade as a result of weathering. Grazing stalks right away will put more condition on cows. However, be sure to check fields for grain content before grazing. Dryland fields tend to have more grain loss because of small ears in dry years and too much corn can cause acidosis and founder. Be sure to adapt cattle to a higher corn ration before grazing if you expect problems.



Photo: E. Mousel, SDSU©

How should I graze corn stalks?

Strip grazing by giving animals a specific amount of land area (usually a couple weeks worth) provides a more uniform diet and improves utilization. However, when strip grazing, lots of