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Contacts:

- \* Daryl Strohbehn, professor of animal science, Iowa State University, (515) 294-3020, [stroh@iastate.edu](mailto:stroh@iastate.edu)
- \* Byron Leu, beef field specialist, Iowa State University Extension, (641) 472-4166, [bleu@iastate.edu](mailto:bleu@iastate.edu)
- \* Nancy Foster, communications specialist, Iowa Beef Center, (515) 294-9124, [nfoster@iastate.edu](mailto:nfoster@iastate.edu)

*For immediate release*

## WET WEATHER AFFECTING HOW PRODUCERS WILL FEED CATTLE THIS WINTER

*Resources available through Iowa Beef Center to help adjust, assess needs*

**AMES, Iowa** – Several thousand of Iowa’s cow-calf producers rely on feeding cornstalks through the winter each year to help reduce their feed bill.

However, the heavy rains seen in October have damaged the quality of Iowa’s cornstalks, meaning producers must assess their situation for the winter and consider changing their feed strategy, members of the Iowa Beef Center at Iowa State University said today.

Daryl Strohbehn, professor of animal science at Iowa State, said producers are now determining their inventories for winter feed. Working against them is a smaller hay crop than usual, thanks to warm temperatures in March and a killing frost in April. Those weather conditions left the first hay crop about 30-40 percent short of its usual production, Strohbehn said.

“Because of that, our total hay production for the year is way short of where it normally would be, and so it’s put pressure on a lot of producers,” said Strohbehn, who works with the Iowa Beef Center. “They almost have to depend on getting cornstalks harvested this fall so they have enough feed inventory to get through the winter.”

However, most of Iowa then saw at least 4 inches of rain in October. That is negatively affecting both harvest yields, which will likely be lower than expected this year, and the quality of the cornstalks. The excess rain has leached nutrients from the cornstalks, reducing their energy content. It’s also impacted their palatability, causing cows to decrease their consumption. Therefore, producers will have to increase the energy supplementation in their animals’ feed rations, Strohbehn said.

“These are problems producers need to address in their nutrition program in the upcoming winter,” he said.

To assist producers with assessing their needs, the Iowa Beef Center has posted a feed inventory worksheet on its Web site, [www.iowabeefcenter.org](http://www.iowabeefcenter.org), along with a fact sheet about managing cow herd feed needs.

The site includes another fact sheet, as well, about how producers can stretch their hay supplies, which have become quite costly since they are in shorter supply. That’s why the ability to use cornstalks as a supplement is so beneficial, as cornstalks cost far less per ton than hay, said Byron Leu, Iowa State University Extension beef field specialist.

“That’s why cornstalks in Iowa are so important,” Strohbehn said. “They are cost competitive and can be used to stretch high-priced products.”

If feed inventories are tight, Strohbehn and Leu recommend farmers think about the following:

- Reduce non-productive animals
- Consider alternative feeds
- Consider high-concentrate feeding instead of purchasing forages at exorbitant prices
- Reduce waste in the feeding routines
- Utilize ration formulation software packages
- Refer to materials available on the Iowa Beef Center Web site

For more information about these recommendations, review the following materials on IBC's Web site:

- Managing 2007-08 Cow Herd Feed Needs (includes Feed Inventory Worksheet)
- High-Concentrate Feeding Beef Cows to Reduce Hay Needs
- Stretching Hay Supplies for Beef Cow Herds in a Shortage Year

The Iowa Beef Center at Iowa State University was formed in 1996 by a legislative mandate. Its goal is to support the growth and vitality of the beef cattle industry in the state. As part of ISU Extension, the Beef Center also serves as a central access point for all ISU programs and research related to the beef industry.

For more information about the Iowa Beef Center, visit [www.iowabeefcenter.org](http://www.iowabeefcenter.org).

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