

DOUBLE CROPPING SUMMER AND FALL SILAGE CROPS FOR BEEF CATTLE

B.L. Powell, K.J. Simon, J.A. Jennings¹

Double cropping corn grown for silage along with a combination of winter annuals has the potential to be more profitable than corn grown alone as well as beneficial to soil health. Five acres of a combination of Jerry Oats, Elbon Rye and Crimson Clover were drilled September 1st into a clean-tilled seedbed at the rate of 65 lbs/acre of Oats, 50 lb/acre of Cereal Rye and 15 lb/acre of Crimson Clover. Harvesting of the winter annual mix began October 31st using a self-propelled silage cutter. The first harvest consisted mainly of oats with some cereal rye. Once cut, the oats and rye were transported a short distance to a TMR mixer where it was mixed with 2 parts corn silage and 10% Dried Distillers Grain. The resulting ration was then bunk fed to 5 and 6 weight steers to produce a 3 lb/day gain. Temperatures dipped into the upper teens on January 18th and remained below freezing for three days in a row which killed the oats, but the cereal rye was there to take its place so there was no gap in forage production. We saw little forage production out of the Crimson Clover until late spring, but its' added value to soil health made it worth adding to the mix. Due to spring rains, the field flooded in early March; only weeks before planting time. Because of the cover crop, we were able to drill corn into the cover crop as soon as the water was off the field. After the final harvest of the rye, the cover crop was terminated using 1 quart/acre of 41% glyphosate. Forage yields for the cover crop were estimated at 4000 lb/acre of oats and 4000 lb/acre of cereal rye with a combined crude protein of 19.8% and a TDN value of 64.8%.

¹County Extension Agent – Agriculture, University of Arkansas, Cooperative Extension Service, Danville AR (blpowell@uaex.edu); Animal Science Program Associate – Forages, UACES, Little Rock AR (ksimon@uaex.edu); Animal Science Professor and Extension Forage Specialist, UACES, Little Rock AR (jjennings@uaex.edu).