

While wind, hail, floods, and drought have destroyed the potential for corn harvest in some fields this season, forage production may offer a viable option for salvaging the value of what's left.

Before beginning any type of harvest, check with both the insurance agent and the local Farm Service Agency office to avoid disqualification from any supplemental payments.

Silage or Hay

If the corn is still standing, it obviously can be chopped for silage or even cut and baled as hay. It's really important to get the moisture content right for either option, but getting it dry enough for hay might be the most difficult.

Tall plants are difficult to mow, stalks need to be run through a conditioner, and windrows need a long time to dry.

Remaining ears are especially hard to dry so they tend to spoil inside the bale.

Grazing

Grazing may be the simplest option. If there is more ruined corn than cattle to consume it, just build a fence around the entire field as you would when grazing stalks in winter.

Another option would be to find more cattle to graze the corn. Yearlings easily gain 1.5 pounds to two pounds per day on corn forage, usually more. This can produce some pretty cheap gain for feedlot cattle compared to feeding grain or by-products.

Strip Grazing

If producers are strip grazing the field, get two to three times as many animal days of grazing as if cattle were given access to the entire field. Strip grazing doesn't need to be complicated or take much additional time.

Place water access at one end of the field and string an electric hot wire across the field so animals have access to only a couple days supply of corn to begin.

To make it easier to build the fence and for animals to see it, use a tractor, four-wheeler, or pickup to first drive over the path of the electric wire to knock down standing corn. Every few days, repeat this process and let the animals walk back to water over previously grazed stalks.

It's heartbreaking to lose a good cornfield to bad weather, but salvage as much as possible by using it as forage.