

BEEF PRODUCTION IN IOWA

Daryl Busby from Iowa Beef Extension was the guest speaker on May 10. He said that 90% of feedlots in Iowa with over 500 head of cattle are feeding distillers' grains from Corn Ethanol plants. They are looking at how to incorporate more distillers' gains into pork and chicken production.

Ethanol production removes starch from corn. The remaining product has three times the oil and three times the protein. Since the oil level can reach 7 1/2 %, distillers' grains are limited to a mixture with it as 40% of the cattle feed. It has too much oil for pig and chicken feed.

Ethanol plants would like to dry 1/3 of the output grain and leave 2/3 wet, due to the cost of drying. In the winter the wet will remain usable more than 10 days, but in the summer the maximum time is 7-10 days. The dry grain is worth about 92% of the original corn price, but the wet grain in summer is only worth 60%. They are investigating taking the summer grain and mixing it with 15% hay and storing as silage to feed in winter. The excess protein in distillers' grains is not a problem for cattle.

From 2002 to 2007 the value of manure in cattle feedlots went up \$40, from \$15 to \$55 per ton. It is now a valuable commodity, so cattle producers are controlling it better.

There has been a fear that high corn prices would make cattle more expensive to raise in Iowa than in Texas and elsewhere. Transportation costs currently give Iowa a \$20 advantage in cost. Most Iowa feedlots are full. In fact, an additional 5% of cattle have moved from Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas to Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota in the past few years.

The Iowa Beef Extension is investigating hoop building with deep pits for cattle production. Air flow is a concern in the hot summer.

There are several experiments underway in the United States for alternatives to corn for ethanol production. One promising alternative is using stover (corn cobs) with a plant in Esterville, Iowa as a test site. In Georgia they are testing use of tree products and in Tennessee they are testing use of switch grass.