Minimizing Equipment Costs on a Grazing Farm

Final Report for FNE96-120

Project Type: Farmer
Funds awarded in 1996: $2,683.00
Projected End Date: 12/31/1998
Region: Northeast
State: Pennsylvania
Project Leader:

Marion Bowlan

Project Information

Summary:

Note to readers, attached is the complete final report for FNE96-120

Mrs. Bowlan was interested in experimenting with feed corn, not for silage, but as forage, for her cattle to graze. She planted hairy vetch in September, 1995 as a winter cover, and killed it with Roundup herbicide the following May. Early in June she planted corn into this, with a no-till planter, in 15-inch rows. The mass of dead vegetation served effectively to control weeds until the corn was tall enough to fend for itself.

Mrs. Bowlan allowed her yearling cattle to begin grazing the corn in early August, when it was tasseling. Initially, to allow their digestive tracts to adjust to this new diet, she let them graze on the corn no more than two hours per day, grazing them on other pastures for the rest of the time.

Mrs. Bowlan reports that her cattle loved the corn, on one occasion breaking down a fence to get at it. Her yields were on the order of 22 tons of green matter or, allowing for a moisture content measured at 65%, 7.7 tons of dry matter per acre, which compared favorably with yields of orchardgrass (7 tons/acre), alfalfa (7 tons/acre), and timothy (5 tons/acre) grown in her area. She was able to continue grazing her cattle in the corn until early October.

Mrs. Bowlan figures that field preparation for her corn cost $188/acre, the seed corn cost $37.50, and spraying to kill the vetch, another $33.50, for a total per acre cost of $259. Dividing this by the yield gives a cost of production of $33.60 per ton of dry matter.

Mrs. Bowlan tried essentially the same thing the following year, but the corn did not do well at all under the drought that prevailed over much of the Northeast U.S. during the summer of 1997. She continues to believe grazing on corn is feasible for cattle in her area. She warns, however, not to expect great results in a dry year.

- FNE96-120 Final Report

Cooperators

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Research

Participation Summary

Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education US Department of Agriculture

This site is maintained by SARE Outreach for the SARE program and is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award No. 2019-38640-29881. SARE Outreach operates under cooperative agreements with the University of Maryland to develop and disseminate information about sustainable agriculture. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
