

Replacement Heifers Love His Soybean Forage

Soybeans for forage? Even with prices pushing \$14/bushel, Ray Schwarz figures he still gets more value using soybeans for cattle forage than selling the beans.

"We get a lot of strange looks when our soybeans are so tall," admits Schwarz, who farms with his father, Kenton, in Northwest Missouri. And, when corn is intermingled in the beans, passersby likely question their farming skills as well. But soybeans have worked perfectly to feed their dairy replacement heifers for the past 15 years.

"A lot of beef guys in this area are doing the same thing. Local farmers planted four semi loads of seed last spring," Schwarz says.

They purchased the seed, a non-GMO variety, from Arkansas. By growing seed intended for a warmer climate and planting a dense population, the beans grow taller with smaller stems as the plants reach up to compete for sunlight. Planted at 300,000 seeds per acre, harvest - after flowering when the first soft pods form - yields about 5 tons of dry matter/acre.

"We needed higher quality forage than corn silage provided," says Schwarz. "Soybean silage is about the same as medium quality alfalfa."

Growing soybeans is economical and allows the Missouri farmer to double crop. He

plants triticale in the fall, harvests it in early May, and plants soybeans for mid-August harvest.

"We have about a 2-week window to harvest," Schwarz says, explaining if you wait too long the plant starts to get woody from the bottom up. It can be cut higher to avoid the woody base, but that means less tonnage.

The Gower, Mo., farmer chops, then stores the forage in upright silos and wrapped bales. It would be very difficult to dry for hay, he adds, and many of the nutrients would be lost.

Soybeans have less input costs than corn since they don't require nitrogen and have higher feed value at 15 to 20 percent protein. They yield tonnage similar to corn. Most importantly, cattle love the bean silage. Many farmers mix it 50/50 with hay or other forages.

With expected higher prices, Schwarz figures he'll spend about \$40 for two bags of seed/acre this year, and he'll still come out ahead. He has experimented with adding 15,000 to 20,000 kernels of corn/acre to further increase the tonnage.

Specific varieties have been developed for forage. In his experience, Schwarz believes that many varieties will work. Just select one intended for zones south of your location.



Ray Schwarz figures he gets more value using soybeans for cattle forage than selling the beans. He grows a variety intended for warmer climates.

Choosing non-GMO varieties saves money, and early use of chemicals to start weed-free is all that's necessary as the plants come up thick and shade out weed competition. Most farmers in his area tolerate some weeds in the mix.

"Overall soybeans are an economic forage

crop to raise. It's a pretty versatile crop that's been overlooked," Schwarz says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Kenton and Ray Schwarz, 764 N.W. Schwarz Rd., Gower, Mo. 64454 (ph 816 930-1200 or 816 539-3939; schwarzweis1@juno.com).



Nathan Overholt's son sits safely above the action and controls the hydraulics that lift and split logs, while Nathan moves logs around.

Powerful Log Splitter Built With Safety In Mind

After an accident cut off one of his son's fingers, Nathan Overholt set out to build a better, safer log splitter. Now his son sits safely above the action and controls the hydraulics that lift and split logs, while Overholt moves logs around.

Finished with Deere paint and decals, the splitter looks more like a factory splitter than a made-it-myself project that started with an old I-beam. Set up to be a stationary unit, it can be pulled with a receiver hitch from the front or back. A protective cover with a seat on top houses the two 5-in. hydraulic cylinders that came off an old crane. Overholt runs the hydraulic fluid through the axle tubing, which acts as a reservoir.

"I normally just use one cylinder because it's faster, but when we have heavy logs, I use both," says Overholt, explaining that he sometimes buys firewood logs up to 48 in. in diameter.

Because of that, he added a lifting feature.

An arm on one side has hydraulically telescoping forks to reach under logs, lift them up and roll them to the table next to the splitter. Once on the table, Overholt moves the blocks around to feed the splitter, which has a 20-in. wedge he built up out of 1 1/2-in. thick steel. It splits wood up to 42 in. long.

"We've used the splitter for six years, and it works like a charm," Overholt says. "It has electric start, a pressure gauge and all the bells and whistles."

Overholt's main expense was the 13 hp Honda engine that powers the rig. Besides using wood to heat his Russellville, Ky., home and shop, and to boil down maple syrup in the spring, he joins other volunteers from his church to split wood for people in need.

"We usually get to do the big wood," Overholt says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Nathan Overholt, 4919 Stevenson Mill Road, Russellville, Ky. 52276 (ph 270 725-0320).



Tablets are buried next to plants to make them taste like red pepper, acting as a deterrent to deer and other pest animals throughout the growing season.

Photo courtesy of UMD-NRRI

"Hot Pill" For Plants Keeps Critters Away

It's commonly known that critters don't like red pepper, so spraying plants with a red pepper/water mix is a home remedy that works - at least until it rains.

Now imagine making the whole plant or tree taste like red pepper throughout the growing season. That's exactly what a new product available this spring will do.

Repellex, a pest control company that specializes in natural control products, is in the final stages of EPA approval to sell tablets (the size of three stacked nickels) to bury next to trees, shrubs and other non-edible plants. The capsicum (red pepper) in the tablets dissolves into the roots and moves throughout the plant, acting as a deterrent to deer and other pest animals throughout the growing season. It lasts up to a year.

Jeff Wineke, sales manager for Repellex, says it can take 7 to 30 days for the capsicum to penetrate through the plant, so the company recommends using a topical spray in addition to the tablets at first. A topical application may also be useful through the winter when the plant is no longer growing.

Wineke notes that the tablets work new and established trees and plants such as hostas and other perennials that deer and rabbits love to eat. Depending on the size, it can take anywhere from one to three tablets, planted 1 to 3 in. deep in the ground near the roots of the plant or tree. Estimated cost is \$20 for a bottle of 50 tablets, available at garden centers that will be listed on Repellex's website.

Because of the taste, the tablets aren't

suitable for edible plants. But homeowners, landscapers and nursery owners who battle wildlife destruction will appreciate the product, says Tom Levar, the University of Minnesota forestry and horticultural specialist who did the research that led to the product.

In 2005, he was searching for treatment options for his wife's cancer when he learned about dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) used in veterinary and sports medicine to open pores in a membrane and move medicines through skin. He used the same idea to develop the plant formulation to move chemicals through easily accessible plant pores. Repellex did its own research with red pepper and obtained the first license to use Levar's discovery.

Levar is excited about the concept because it transposes technology from one field (medicine) to another (horticulture).

"In this case, we don't have to genetically modify the plant. We can push small molecules into the plant," he says, without any harmful side effects.

Levar is also hopeful that one day the technology can be used to add vitamins or helpful pharmaceuticals to fortify crops.

"In my mind, that's the highest end use," Levar says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Repellex USA Inc., P.O. Box 396, Niles, Mich. 49120 (ph 877 737-3539; www.repellex.com) or Tom Levar (ph 218 720-4333; tlevar@nrri.umn.edu).