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Plot Results and Interpreting Data

With snow covering or starting to cover many of the harvested fields across Western Canada, planning for the 2021 growing season has already begun. Fertility plans, equipment modifications and of course, seed selection for the next growing season is top of mind for many farming operations. Below are a few things that your PRIDE Seeds Agronomists encourage you to consider when making your seed decisions for 2021.

Plot Results - Why They Matter

As seed selection is a critical decision for farmers, seed companies participate in agronomy and hybrid/variety trials to provide insight to farmers about how their products perform in numerous locations. Once harvest results are released, farmers can use this data to help make their decisions for next year.

PRIDE Seeds posts data from all corn silage, grain corn and soybean trials to www.prideseed.com. Across Western Canada, we were part of over 75 trial sites gathering data for silage corn, grain corn & soybeans. The purpose of these sites is to showcase our product performance and generate local data to aid farmers and retail partners in selecting the right product for their seed portfolio mix. These large-scale strip trials are only possible with the help of our valued plot cooperators, retail partners and other companies.

What to look for when interpreting Grain Corn Data

When interpreting grain corn data, it's crucial to understand that no hybrid; even if it truly has higher yield potential, wins every yield plot or test every time. The more data and comparisons that are examined, the higher our level of understanding can be.

If several products are top yielders for your conditions, it's important to ask for information that could help with a 'tie break' scenario. Examples of tie breaker information include:

- What is standability like late in the season?
- What is the disease package and trait platform?
- How does the product handle tougher soils vs sandy soils?
- What would the product do under drought stress?

All of these questions are valid and will help with the overall understanding of which hybrid(s) you should include in your seed portfolio mix for your farming operation and why.

What to look for when interpreting Silage Data

When interpreting corn silage data both QUANTITY and QUALITY need to be considered.

QUANTITY considers the yield from the field. Yield/acre at the time of harvest will give growers a good indication of how well a specific hybrid performed when harvested at a given maturity. However, it is crucial to understand that harvesting a hybrid at in improper maturity will change the yield. Harvesting early can result in high yields and wetter corn, while harvesting late can results in lower yields but drier corn. Timing harvest correctly can result in maximizing yield and quality.

QUALITY considers the feed value of the corn silage. Quality parameters that can be helpful to assess when comparing corn silage feed results include: dry matter (DM), starch content, neutral detergent fibre digestibility (NDFD), total digestible nutrients (TDN), milk/ton, milk/acre and beef/acre. Below is an overview of these parameters.

Parameter *	Type of Parameter	
Yield (tons/ac)	Quantity	35% DM (65% moisture content) is the ideal harvest timing for most hybrids to ensure adequate nutrient levels and adequate moisture for packing & ensiling. The ideal harvest DM can vary depending on the storage system.
DM (%)	Quantity & Quality	*Dry Matter: the moisture free content of the sample (100-harvest moisture=%DM)* % DM is a key value to assess before chopping corn silage. Evaluating rations on a dry matter basis is important, as moisture dilutes the concentration of the nutrients but does not have major influence on intake.
Starch	Quality	The amount of carbohydrate that is present (generally) in the grain of corn. Corn kernels are the source of starch in the corn silage. Starch is an easily accessible energy source for the rumen.
NDFD (%)	Quality	*Definition: measure of digestibility of the neutral detergent fibre (NDF) (lignin, cellulose, and hemicellulose – insoluble fraction of the cell wall)* This test determines how much feed material has been digested by the microorganisms in a set amount of time (24 or 48 hours). When interpreting NDFD-48, higher values are desired – mid to high 60's to low 70's.
TDN (%)/ Energy	Quality	TDN is the sum of all digestible organic nutrients that are available to the animal AND directly related to digestible energy. This value expressed as a % of DM
Milk/ton (lb/ton DM)	Quality	This value summarizes the overall silage quality of a hybrid. This value considers DM, crude protein, NDF, NDFD, starch and non-fibre carbohydrates of the silage.
Milk/acre (lbs/ac)	Quantity & Quality	The milk/acre value is calculated by multiplying milk/ton by the DM yield. This value is largely influenced by yield and should be viewed as one of the many indicators of silage yield not the sole indicator.
Beef/acre (lbs/ac)	Quantity & Quality	This is the beef industry's equivalent to milk/ac calculation, considering the digestibility of the energy components. Using TDN and dry tons/ acre this value estimates the pounds of beef produced off an acre of corn silage.

* this is a brief overview – more parameters can also be used to assess quality of corn silage

Additional Readings

Selecting corn hybrids for silage production

What defines high quality corn silage?

Feed analysis reports explained

Don't delay, contact your local **CANTERRA Seeds** retailer for a product recommendation and **book your seed for 2021**.

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