KY Winter Feeding Area Resource Concerns
Kentucky Natural Resources Conservation Service

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary Farm Bill programs that benefit both agricultural producers and the environment.

Overview
NRCS will help you develop a conservation plan that meets your goals and vision. This plan becomes your road map for selecting the right conservation practices for your land. NRCS offers about 200 unique practices designed for working farms and forests.

NRCS financial assistance may be available to cover part of the costs of implementing conservation practices. Interested producers can apply and compete for financial assistance through one of the programs offered by NRCS.

Benefits
Cattle producers can benefit from the technical and financial assistance offered by NRCS to implement better grazing and nutrient management on their operations. Cattlemen can request assistance with pasture division fence, development of water sources, and protecting environmentally-sensitive areas. Additionally, producers can seek assistance to address the concerns of their current winter feedlot management system.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
provides technical and financial assistance to eligible agricultural and nonindustrial private forest land producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits. EQIP is authorized to address environmental concerns such as water and air quality, ground and surface water conservation, soil health and soil erosion and sedimentation, wildlife habitat improvement, and to mitigate against drought and increasing weather volatility.

Who is Eligible?
Agricultural producers who own or rent agricultural land may be eligible to participate in EQIP. Interested agricultural producers should contact their local NRCS office to discuss program eligibility requirements.

To be eligible for a winter feeding structure, the producer must meet the definition of an Animal Feeding Operation (AFO): “agricultural enterprises where animals are kept and raised in confined situations. AFOs congregate animals, feed, manure and urine, dead animals, and production operations on a small land area. Feed is brought to the animals rather than the animals grazing or otherwise seeking feed in pastures or fields.”

Producers must first work with NRCS to develop a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) that addresses all fields under their management. A CNMP will address the best approach to handle concerns associated with winter feeding, and document whether a winter feeding & waste storage structure are the best alternative.

Alternatives
Bale Grazing is a technique where the producer strategically locates hay bales throughout the field after harvest so that cattle can access throughout the winter. This prevents rutting caused by tractors and enables the producer to move the feeding location more often since equipment access during inclement weather isn’t a limiting factor.

Strip grazing is another low cost practice that can extend the grazing season and reduce feed inputs. Stockpiled forage (minimum height of 8" by fall) is grazed in strips using temporary fencing so that full utilization is gained. Stockpiling and strip grazing forages reduces winter confinement periods, resulting in less damage to fields and less manure to collect and store since it is distributed in the fields by the grazing livestock.

Natural Resources Conservation Service
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