

## ***Using Lighter Weight Sorghum Grain for Cattle***

**Ted McCollum III, PAS-ACAN  
Texas AgriLife Extension Service – Texas A&M System  
Amarillo**

Growing conditions during the 2008 production year have produced some grain sorghum with light test weights. Light weight sorghum is being discounted or refused by elevators. Alternative uses are available for producers. Terms and conditions of insurance policies may limit alternatives.

### **Options to salvage some value from light weight sorghum:**

(1). Do not harvest the grain. If initial harvests from fields are testing light (elevators are rejecting grain below 48 or 50 lbs./bu in 2008), do not harvest the remainder of the field. The standing sorghum plants can be grazed by cattle – either cows or stocker cattle. Grazing will be relatively short-term (30-90 days) depending on the number of cattle stocked and the targeted amount of residue one desires to leave on the field. Grazing the crop may require some temporary fencing and livestock water but also reduces harvest and storage costs and captures some value from the vegetative portion of the crop as well as the grain.

(2). Swath and bale hay. Again if the initial grain is testing light then haying may be an option. Again this can derive some value from the grain and the fodder portions of the plant. Dried sorghum is difficult to bale well. This can present some issues with storage life of the baled crop and wastage if the hay is fed in bale form. The hay can be ground and incorporated into a mixed feed to reduce waste.

(3). Harvest the grain and utilize on-site with livestock. For cattle, light test weight sorghum in the 45-55 lb/bu range has a feeding value at or near that of normal test weight sorghum. For swine and poultry, feeding value will be a bit lower than normal test weight sorghum. Typically, protein concentration will be higher in lighter weight sorghum. Although this is of some value, grains are fed to livestock for their energy value. Sorghum grain (or any other grain) by itself is not an appropriate supplement for moderate to low quality forages for cattle. The grain is better used as an energy source in mixed diets or as a supplement to cattle grazing high quality forages such as small grains pastures.

Sorghum grain can be fed to livestock as whole grain however the feeding value is reduced. Any sorghum, light or heavy, should be processed – ground, cracked, flaked—prior to feeding to improve feeding value. Seed size affects the amount of energy and success of processing sorghum.

For further assistance please contact Ted McCollum III, Extension Beef Cattle Specialist, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Amarillo. E-mail: [ft-mccollum@tamu.edu](mailto:ft-mccollum@tamu.edu). Phone: 806-677-5600.