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BMR sorghums beef up production

Hereford, TX – North American beef producers are finding silage and grazing forages from Brown Midrib (BMR) 6-Gene hybrids to be advantageous to their cow-calf, stocker and feedlot operations in significantly lowering beef production costs per pound of gain and in cost of beef production per acre.

Sorghums with lower lignin content, such as BMR 6, have digestibility and palatability characteristics similar to corn (Table 1). This is demonstrated by feed-quality trials conducted at Texas A&M University where researchers found that replacing corn silage with sorghum silage had no affect on rate of gain or the feed efficiency of cattle. BMR-6 forage sorghum silage was nutritionally equal to corn silage, which is due to the high digestibility of the specific type of sorghum.

“Lignin is the primary constituent that provides strength to the cell wall,” says Ricky Rice, Advanta US forage specialist and sales manager. “Lignin is very much like the rebar used in a concrete.”

“Lignin is the primary non-digestible component of forages – the higher the lignin percentage the lower the digestibility and quality,” he continues. “Brown Midrib 6-gene

sorghums have 40 percent to 60 percent less lignin compared to conventional sorghums and are similar and often times better, in nutritive value than corn silage."

University studies have proven that digestibility of BMR 6 sorghum forages is superior to other BMR products and conventional sorghums, which results in a significant increase in average daily gain and pounds of beef gained per acre (Table 2).

The bottom line for productivity in beef cattle is digestibility of the feed. Studies have shown in-vitro total digestibles (IVTD) of over 80 percent for the BMR 6 sorghums (Table 1), according to Rice.

In addition to providing nutritional benefits to livestock, increased forage digestibility also provides economic benefits to the producer in a couple of ways. First, more digestible forages can be substituted directly for a standard forage and, because of the greater nutrient availability, animal performance will increase. Second, the composition of the diet can be changed to reflect the additional nutritional value of the more digestible forage, which will reduce the need for costly energy, concentrates and reduce overall production costs.

In addition to lower beef production costs, feeding BMR-6 sorghum forages could be considered environmentally prudent. Research has shown that phosphorus digestibility is very high in BMR-6 sorghum (Figure 1), which results in lower residual levels of phosphorous in manure.

"A BMR 6 sorghum-sudangrass ration has been shown to reduce fecal phosphorous excretion in dairy cows by 6 grams per day when compared to corn silage," says Rice. "This amount of reduction in phosphorus excretion is potentially important from an environmental and economical standpoint. Feeding BMR 6 sorghums could significantly reduce the potential for surface and ground water contamination."

At any rate, Brown Midrib (BMR) 6 sorghum hybrids are helping beef producers hold the line on production costs while maintaining the feed value they expect from grain-based silage.

Table 1. Quality Characteristics of Different Forages.

Forage Type	Forage Quality Parameters				
	CP %	ADF %	NDF %	Lignin %	IVTD %
Conventional Forage Sorghum	8.3	29.9	49.1	4.4	75.5
Brown Midrib 6 Forage Sorghum	9.2	27.6	45.9	3.6	81.3
Corn	9.0	23.9	41.2	3.5	82.7

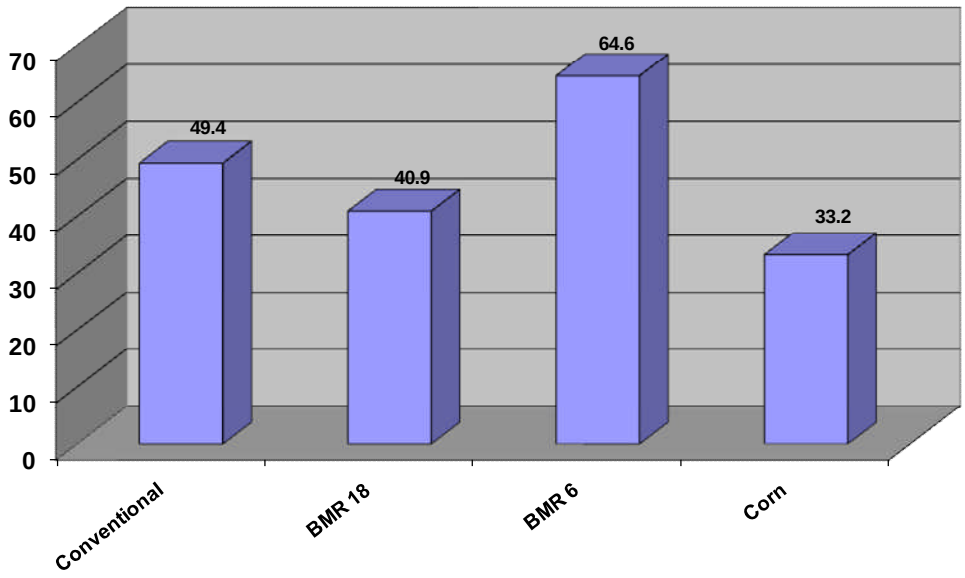
Bean, et al., Texas AgriLife Extension Service, 2001

Table 2. Effects of Grazing Conventional and BMR 6 Sorghum-sudangrass on Performance of Stocker Calves.

Forage Type	Gain (lbs/day)			Gain (lbs/acre)		
	1999	2000	Average	1999	2000	Average
Conventional sorghum-sudangrass	2.74	2.51	2.63	305	295	300
BMR 6 sorghum-sudangrass	2.91	2.97	2.94	316	359	338

McCollum et al., Texas AgriLife Extension Service, 2003

Figure 1. Phosphorus Digestibility in Different Forages.



Advanta US offers unique germplasm for high quality forage sorghums, sudangrasses, hybrid grain sorghums, sorghums for biofuels and sunflowers. For more information on Advanta US and its products, go to: www.advantaus.com.

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