



** This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online <https://ksre-learn.com/feeding-corn>

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Cattle Chat: Feeding cracked versus whole corn

K-State beef cattle nutritionist Phillip Lancaster says digestibility increases by 5% when corn is cracked

[By Lisa Moser](#), K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Beef producers make decisions about what to feed their animals daily and the answer often depends on the age and sex of the animal and what its job in the herd is. When deciding which type of feed to offer, cost is a consideration, Kansas State University beef cattle nutritionist Phillip Lancaster said.

Speaking on a recent Beef Cattle Institute [Cattle Chat](#) podcast, Lancaster addressed a question about feeding cracked corn to steers being raised to the finished stage on the home operation.

“There is a difference in the digestibility of whole corn versus cracked corn,” he said. “Because the steer ration will have a high level of corn, there is a benefit to feeding them cracked corn, and that is about a 5% increase in the net energy of gain from that corn.”

In the case of the steers, Lancaster said the price of corn would guide his recommendation.

“Is it cost-effective to feed cracked corn? If the feed mills are charging \$10 a ton to crack the corn, then the price of the corn needs to be about \$6 per bushel or higher for that to pay off,” Lancaster said.

As for the cows that are getting a feed supplement along with their high forage diet, Lancaster advised feeding whole corn instead of cracked corn.

“Because it is a lower percent of the diet and the cows will be able to do the mechanical breakdown by chewing their cud, it is more cost-effective to feed them whole corn,” he said.

Lancaster added that even if producers observe whole corn kernels in the feces, it doesn’t mean that the animal did not get energy from the corn.

“Whole corn will be less digested than cracked corn, but bacteria will still penetrate the hull and some starch from the inside will be digested,” he said.

To hear the full discussion, listen to [Cattle Chat](#) on your preferred streaming platform.

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story

Beef Cattle Institute Cattle Chat podcast, <https://ksre-learn.com/cattle-chat-feeding-corn>

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