

Cornstalk bales stack up in northeast Colorado

Written by Darci Tomky

- The ethanol industry has done more than affect trips to the gas pumps. This time of year in northeastern Colorado, farmers are stacking up cornstalk bales. In a growing trend, livestock producers use these cornstalks to mix as filler with ethanol byproducts such as distiller grain and corn gluten.
- According to Dave Gibson of Anderson Alfalfa, their crews have been baling cornstalks for around 10 years but have seen an increase in the last 3-4 years due to the boom in the ethanol industry.
- Because forage has increased in price due to high corn prices, corn stalks are now an inexpensive substitute for the forage or hay used for cattle rations. Cornstalks mixed with wet or dry distiller's grain make a high-protein, low-cost feed.
- Gibson said cornstalk baling has "benefits for everybody." Anderson Alfalfa and others in the area make use of the winter months baling, grinding and hauling the cornstalks to feedlots. Gibson said they began baling in mid-November and finished up a couple weeks ago.
- From the corn grower's perspective, it is a form of trash management for their fields. Gibson suggests rotating fields, baling cornstalks on a field once every other year. In addition to mixing cornstalks with ethanol byproducts, livestock producers also use the stalks for feed by itself as well as for livestock bedding.