

## News Topics



<a href="#">All Categories</a>	<a href="#">Food &amp; Nutrition</a>
<a href="#">Awards &amp; Recognition</a>	<a href="#">For the Home</a>
<a href="#">Biotechnology</a>	<a href="#">Forestry</a>
<a href="#">Climate &amp; Weather</a>	<a href="#">Happenings</a>
<a href="#">Communities</a>	<a href="#">Lawn &amp; Garden</a>
<a href="#">Consumer Education</a>	<a href="#">Livestock</a>
<a href="#">Crop Production</a>	<a href="#">Public Policy</a>
<a href="#">Drought</a>	<a href="#">Research</a>
<a href="#">Economics</a>	<a href="#">Rural Issues</a>
<a href="#">Environment &amp; Natural Resources</a>	<a href="#">Students</a>
<a href="#">Extension</a>	<a href="#">Teaching &amp; Education</a>
<a href="#">Families</a>	<a href="#">Urban Issues</a>
<a href="#">Farm Management</a>	<a href="#">Work</a>
<a href="#">Feed &amp; Forage</a>	<a href="#">Youth &amp; 4H</a>

## News Archive

### Search IANR News

### View by Month/ Year



### View by Date & Title

## Happenings

May 21, 2009  
[West Central Equine Conference Scheduled in North Platte](#)

May 21, 2009  
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June 15, 2009  
[June UNL Water Tour Examines California Bay-Delta](#)

May Beef Month 2009:

May 01, 2009

## UNL Research Further Confirms Dried Distillers Grains Positive to Reproduction

LINCOLN, Neb. — University of Nebraska research shows that feeding dried distillers grains to developing heifers not only provides an excellent source of energy and protein for growth but also improves reproduction.

UNL animal scientists conducted a two-year study at two locations in Nebraska to determine if supplementing beef heifers with dried distillers grains as an energy source affected growth or reproduction.

Dried distillers grains are co-produced during the fermentation process of ethanol production, making them an economical feed choice for cattle producers due to Nebraska's ethanol industry, said Rick Funston, beef cattle reproductive physiologist at UNL's West Central Research and Extension Center at North Platte.

"Ethanol production is an important industry in Nebraska, and this could potentially enhance the profitability of ethanol production from corn," Funston said.

However, cattle producers have concerns about lack of research related to possible effects of feeding dried distillers grains in developing heifer diets.

UNL scientists found that supplementing beef heifers with dried distillers grains during development did not affect age at puberty, and actually improved artificial insemination conception and pregnancy rates compared with a supplement similar in energy, crude protein and fat. Distillers grains have about 120 percent the energy of corn in forage diets and contain relatively high levels of crude protein, Funston said.

"This can make them an economically feasible energy source in replacement heifer diets," he said.

With Nebraska producers maintaining an inventory of about 2 million beef cows, at a modest 15 percent replacement rate, this represents almost 300,000 replacement heifers annually, which could equate to an additional demand of 210,000 tons of distillers grains, he said.

The studies were conducted at UNL's Dalbey-Halleck farm near Virginia and at the Agricultural Research and Development Center near Mead.

In each two-year study weaned heifer calves were fed dried distillers grains or a control supplement of dried corn gluten feed, whole corn germ and urea.

In addition to this work, current UNL research also shows favorable results when it comes to feeding other beef females dried distillers grains.

"It offers a competitive advantage of feeding cattle because of ethanol plants and gives cow-calf producers an economic advantage of using these coproducts as well," Funston said.

However, Funston warned against taking the "more is better approach with this – don't exceed protein in the diet," Funston said. "We found that overfeeding protein is



Developing heifers fed dried distillers grains show increased reproductive performance, according to University of Nebraska-Lincoln research.