

Seed .....

# Grain Corn & Silage Corn: Is There a Difference?

Courtesy of Premier Pacific Seeds



Farmers, when selecting corn varieties are becoming more and more interested on two important traits; is it a silage or grain hybrid? Other decisions they pay attention to include whether to take advantage of the Roundup Ready® Corn 2 attribute and is the seed Poncho 250™ treated? A few years ago little corn planted was Roundup Ready® Corn 2 to over 75% projected to be Roundup Ready® Corn 2 in 2006.

Poncho 250™ is an insecticide seed treatment that protects your corn from early season corn insects such as wireworm. In 2005 about 10% of the corn seeded was Poncho 250® treated. This year over 50% of the corn planted will be Poncho 250™ treated.

There are some breeding advancements and other information we should keep in mind while we make our selections. Breeding work in corn hybrids has become increasingly specific to use over the years. The selection traits for making a great grain corn hybrid are not the same as the selection traits for a great silage hybrid. Silage hybrids are bred specifically to produce more milk per acre and more beef per acre since they typically have more total digestible nutrients per acre than grain corn hybrids. The following table provided by Maizex Seeds Inc. summarizes the main differences between silage and grain corn hybrids:

Maizex Seeds Inc. has focused a great deal of atten-

tion to selecting for the leafy (LFM) trait in their silage hybrids. The leafy trait is a natural genetic anomaly that produces taller plants with broader leaves. The ears on the leafy hybrids are fully developed with soft digestible kernels. This breeding work has resulted in a line up of exceptional leafy hybrids.

If you are growing corn exclusively for silage then choosing hybrids that have performed well in your local forage yield trials is one way of taking the guess work out of the selection process. The goal is to produce high quality silage that will result in higher milk and beef production. It is important to choose hybrids that consistently yield above the average and keep in mind that the best silage hybrids usually have a high grain percentage. Consistency is another important characteristic to keep in mind. One year of data at a single site doesn't really give a good indication of a hybrids ability to perform under a variety of conditions year after year.

Every farmer knows that growing conditions can and do vary considerably from one year to the next. Why gamble by choosing a hybrid that has yet to prove itself over time or worse has not even been trialed in your area? If you want to be sure that the data you are referring to is a fair representation then make sure that the trial was conducted by a third party. The Pacific Field Corn Association does an excellent job of providing trial data to farmers in British Columbia.

Two long term consistent leading varieties in the Pacific Field Corn trials are Maizex LF 753 (755 RR) and LF 881. Both are true silage hybrids with high digestibility. LF 753 (LF 755 RR) is a very early corn, at 2350 heat units with very high grain content. Maizex LF 881 RR is a medium season corn with incredible yields. Over the last four years it has been the top variety in the local BC trials.

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	<u>SILAGE CORN</u>	<u>GRAIN CORN</u>
<b>Stalk</b>	Taller, more flexible stalk with thin rind	Shorter, stiffer stalk with thick rind
<b>Leaves</b>	More and broader leaves above the ear	Fewer leaves above the ear
<b>Ears</b>	Lower on the plant with greater chance of multiple ears at lower plant populations	Higher on plant with lower chance of multiple ears at moderate plant populations
<b>Kernel</b>	Soft kernel to maximize digestibility	Hard kernel to withstand harvesting and storage



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