

Soybean Residue – Worth More Than You Might Think

If you were to look at a corn and soybean field side by side, there wouldn't be any doubt which one had more residue. Every 40 bushels of corn results in approximately one ton of residue produced. By comparison, every 30 bushels of soybeans produced results in one ton of residue. When you factor in potential yields of those two crops, simple math tells us what we see visually: corn produces more residue than soybeans.

That doesn't mean that soybean residue is unimportant. A look at residue removal (if completely removed by baling, etc...) from University of Nebraska Extension publication G1846 – *Harvesting Crop Residues* – shows that soybeans remove the same amount of nitrogen (17 lb/ton) as corn does. That residue also houses three pounds per ton of phosphorous and 13 pounds per ton of potassium. That means that the residue left behind from a 50-bushel bean crop is holding almost 30 pounds of N, five pounds of P and just over 20 pounds of K.

The nutrient value isn't the only benefit. UNL research suggests that at least two tons per acre of residue should be left on the field if you are trying to maintain soil organic matter. If you are trying to prevent soil erosion, levels *above* two tons per acre are suggested. Prevention of evaporative soil losses from residue presence are a bonus as well.

Soybean residue *is* important. We may not see much out there at first glance, but it's value is likely more than we think.