

The Mystery of



Mystery #1

Could It Be Corn?

MYSTERIOUS
VOCABULARY WORDS

Bushel
Livestock
Harvested
Absorbent
Biodegradable
Ingredients



KANSAS CORN
STEM

In Kansas, many farmers grow fields and fields of corn. But what do they do with all that corn? Investigate the mystery of how corn is used!

How are these things related to corn?

Top Secret Report from Agent X

We've gained valuable information about this farm but questions remain. See the drone footage from April. We learned the farmer was planting corn. It grew all summer. In the fall, the plant died and the kernels dried. (This dried corn is NOT like the sweet corn we eat!) Then the farmer **harvested** the corn and sold it. Question—who is buying the farmer's corn, and how are they using it?

DRONE FOOTAGE

APRIL



The farmer let us take this drone footage and answered our questions. See the info on these pages.

SEPTEMBER



DATA

Kansas grew 751 million bushels of corn in 2021. What is a **bushel**? How much does it weigh? Perhaps the answer lies in this video footage . . .



TOP SECRET

HELP WANTED: Become an official corn detective! Farmer Bill will train you to investigate which products contain corn.



IDEA: As you read this, think about how many things you use or eat in a day that have corn in them!



LIVESTOCK: Most of the corn in Kansas is fed to livestock. **Livestock** is defined as animals that are raised on a farm, are used for food and other uses, and provide income for farmers who raise them. For example, cows provide milk and meat. Cattle, sheep, pigs and chickens are livestock.

ETHANOL: Next time your parents stop at the gas station, look for a fuel that contains ethanol. Isn't it crazy to think that corn growing in a field can be turned into a fuel?!? Cool Fact: Using ethanol in your vehicle is better for the Earth because it burns cooler and cleaner than gasoline. Ethanol helps keep the air we breathe clean!

OTHER: Did you know the toothpaste you use daily contains corn? Baby diapers and baby powder use corn products to make them **absorbent**. Corn is also in some of our favorite food products like pop, chips and chewing gum. Scientists are creating even more corn-based **biodegradable** plastic products like forks, spoons and cups!

EXPORTS: Did you know some of the corn grown by farmers is loaded into ships to be exported to other countries? That corn is used mainly as livestock feed. Fun Fact: It takes a grain ship about 35 days to go from the U.S. to China!



CSI Corn Science Investigation



CAREERS

RESEARCH SCIENTISTS use their knowledge of science and math to produce and create new products. Dr. Ram Gupta at Pittsburg State University focuses on making new products from corn, and has made a new corn-based biodegradable foam material. He studies every **ingredient** that goes into making a product to find a way to replace one ingredient with corn to make it biodegradable.



Why do we need to stop using so much plastic? Find out here!



ACTIVITY

Too much plastic is bad for our planet, so scientists are creating more biodegradable products made from corn. Take a piece of paper and draw some items made from corn. Now, become a scientist! Draw your own biodegradable product made from corn and explain how it is better for the Earth.



The Mystery of Corn reader series is provided by:

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