

Heifers Harmed By Substance In Silage

Dairy heifers calving slowly and grow slowly when fed silage made from freshly chopped unwilted grass-legume mixtures, presumably because some unidentified organic compound formed during fermentation of silage decreases the appetite of the animal. U S Department of Agriculture scientists report

Lane A Moore and J William Thomas of USDA's Agricultural Research Center at Beltsville, Md., say isolation of this compound may make unwilted grass-legume silage as valuable as hay for feeding dairy animals. The compound also affects the appetite of mature cows causing a decrease in milk production in some cases, but the effect is more marked in growing heifers.

Until more information is obtained, they suggest that farmers wilt their crop a few hours before ensiling, even though this involves mowing before chopping. The scientists found that heifers consumed about twice as much dry matter eating wilted silage as they did eating unwilted silage. In fact, there was little difference between consumption of heavily wilted silage and hay. If silage is not wilted, some hay should be included in

the ration, the scientists recommended.

Recent research showed reduced consumption of dry

matter was not the result of excess water in the unwilted silage at feeding time. When water was added to hay before feeding to make it equal in moisture content to unwilted silage, or when the water content of silage was reduced or increased, the same amount of dry matter was consumed.

Scientists then thought palatability might be the an-

swer, because when heifers were fed hay soaked in silo seepage, their food consumption decreased. However, when seepage was introduced directly into the stomachs appetites also lessened. This proved taste was not the factor causing reduced consumption.

Use of unwilted silage advantageous in the humid east during early summer when heavy rains make difficult to produce high quality hay without drying equipment.

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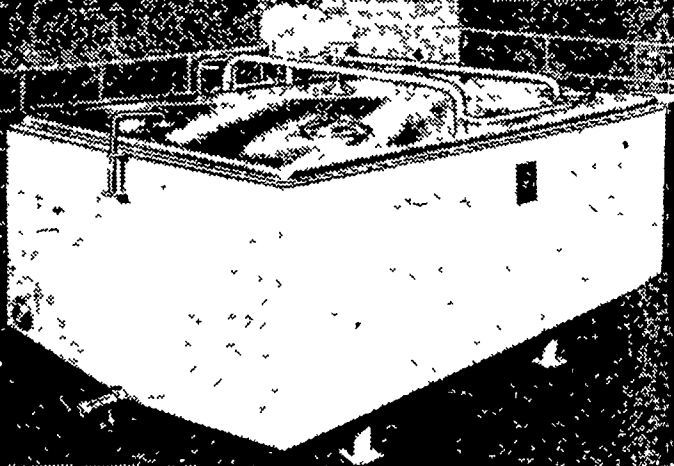
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