



SOIL STEWARDSHIP WEEK
MAY 27—JUNE 3, 1962

Low Moisture Silage From Regular Silos

Conventional upright silos that are properly packed and sealed can produce low-moisture alfalfa silage equal in feeding value to baled hay from the same crop, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports.

Low-moisture silage (about 55 percent moisture content) is made from field-wilted, chopped forage. It contains 10 to 25 percent less moisture than stored silage usually contains.

In a 2-year test conducted by scientists of USDA's Agricultural Research Service, milk cows, heifers and sheep did as well or better on the low-moisture silage than those fed carefully preserved alfalfa hay.

Good alfalfa hay is considered the standard against which other forages are judged. The hay used in the study was mowed, crushed, baled, artificially dried, and kept in a barn.

The researchers attribute the excellent quality of the low-

moisture silage to the careful way in which it was prepared, packed, and sealed.

Most important in making good silage in conventional silos is adding an air-tight top seal after the silo is filled. The scientists used a plastic cover weighted with chopped, non-wilted forage. Also important are chopping the forage into also 1-inch pieces, distributing it evenly in the silo, and sealing the silo doors with plastic, roofing paper, or rubber gaskets.

The experiment was conducted by ARS dairy husbandman J. C. Derbyshire and associates and agricultural engineer J. R. McCalmont at the Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville, Md.

The scientists filled one silo as carefully as possible. After each day's load of wilted, chopped alfalfa was added and tramped down, some non-wilted alfalfa was put on top to keep air from getting to the low-moisture silage. When the silo was almost full, more non-wilted alfalfa was added. Over this went the plastic cover weighted with non-wilted alfalfa.

The second silo was filled

with only low-moisture alfalfa, then topped with non-wilted alfalfa and sealed like the first silo.

The silage and hay were kept stored for five months and then fed to the livestock. Comparisons of milk yields, weight gains, dry matter intake, and digestibility proved that silage from either silo was as good or better than the hay.

Only 1.3 percent spoilage occurred in the carefully sealed silo, more than 91 percent of the alfalfa that went into it was fed.

Spoilage was only 3 percent in the other silo, and 95 percent of the ensiled forage was fed. The scientists conclude from these results that it is unnecessary to add damp alfalfa to the silo to prevent air damage to each day's load of low-moisture silage.

The alfalfa used in the silage tests was mowed, crushed, and windrowed. Then it was chopped and ensiled a day or two before other alfalfa mowed at the same time was ready to bale.

● Broiler Advisory

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in connection with possible recommendation of a course of action to be submitted to the Secretary of Agriculture for his consideration.

There is no legislation at the present time authorizing any market stabilization program for broilers, other than the program for school lunches under which USDA bought 44.8 million pounds of frozen cut-up broilers in 1961.

The proposed program a modification of earlier recommendations could include if authorized by legislation provisions for:

1. Volume control on handling of hatchery output.
2. Allocation provision to assure producers their equitable share of available chick supply during periods of volume regulations.
3. Acquisition of excess supplies of frozen broilers and of breeder hens.
4. Cost of the program would be met by assessments within the industry.

The Committee requested at its last meeting in Washington, D.C., on May 7-8 that USDA attorneys draft for its consideration a program proposal reflecting committee recommendations to stabilize the broiler industry.

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