

Consider Ensiling Perennial Crops When Haymaking Weather Not Fit

by Victor Plastow
Assoc. Agr. Agent

STAGE OF MATURITY AT HARVEST

Any perennial which can be used for hay can also be made into silage. These crops may be put in the silo when weather does not permit cutting them as hay. And when properly harvested and stored, ensiled hay crops make a nutritious, easy to handle feed.

Stage of maturity at the time of harvest is the most important single factor influencing the feeding value of hay crop silage. This is especially true for first-cutting forages, both legumes and grasses. Perennial legumes cut in the early bud contain 65-70% TDN. Left

until they set seed, these same legumes contain only 49% TDN. The same relationship is true for perennial grasses.

To assure high yields of feed nutrients per acre while maintaining a productive stand, perennial forage crops should be cut at the following maturity stages:

MOISTURE RELATIONSHIP

Excessive moisture is the next most serious factor affecting quality. It is difficult to consistently make good quality

Crop	Maturity Stage
Alfalfa (est. stands) - first cutting	Full bud
Alfalfa (1st spring harvest following August seeding)	1/10 to 1/4 bloom
Alfalfa (later cuttings)	1/4 bloom
Red, alsike, ladino clover (1st cutting)	1/4 to 1/2 bloom
Red, alsike, ladino clover (later cuttings)	1/4 bloom
Perennial grasses (1st cutting)	Heads emerging from boot
Perennial grasses (later cuttings)	6 to 7 weeks after first cut

direct-cut silage unless a good feed additive is used at recommended levels; or a recommended chemical preservative is added to keep acetic and butyric acid formation at a minimum.

These acids apparently limit forage intake and may adversely affect thyroid function. Also, high-butyric acid silage has been shown to make dairy cows more susceptible to ketosis or acetoneemia.

Milk production from feeding high moisture silage is similar to that from feeding wilted or low moisture silage—assuming the quality is similar. This is true despite the greater forage dry matter intake with lower moisture silage. However, too often the direct cut silage is inferior in quality, intake is severely limited and the animal may be otherwise adversely affected.

Wilt to at least 65-70% moisture—if low moisture hay crop silage or haylage is made (40-60%) special precautions in harvesting and filling should be taken.

The moisture content of perennial hay-crop when ensiled has a pronounced effect on both field and storage losses of dry matter. Storage losses are highest with direct cut forage while field losses normally increase with increased field wilting.

Small grains will normally produce up to twice as much TDN per acre when harvested for silage as compared to the same crop harvested for grain. On the other hand, it is more difficult to make good quality

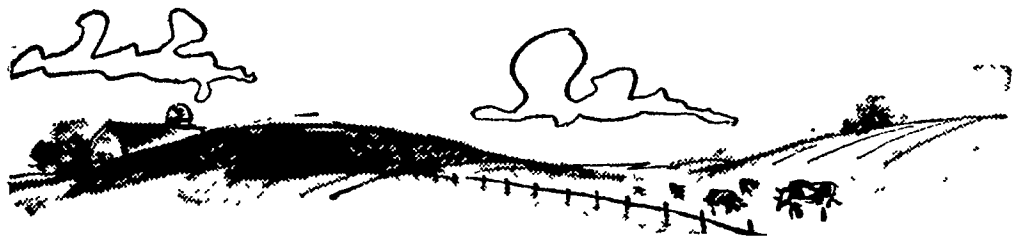
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