

## Drought-drained silage can pose problems

NEWARK, Del. — Many dairy farmers have been making plans to salvage much of this year's drought-stricken corn crop by harvesting it as silage. Filling silos with drought-stressed corn can be a dangerous and difficult practice for two reasons, says University of Delaware extension dairy specialist George Haenlein: first, because of the potentially high nitrate content of the silage; and second, because of the difficulty of packing stalks that are too dry.

Packing dry stalks is no problem with a trench silo, but in an upright silo if the corn isn't green enough, it may be difficult or impossible to remove air pockets created by pieces of stiff stalk. In such cases, farmers may need to (1) add a preservative to prevent development of mold in the presence of air, or (2) add weight in the form of water during filling and a water-filled plastic bag at the top of the silo afterwards to compress the silage. But he says this approach isn't likely to affect air pockets in the lower part of the silo, so the danger of mold remains.

The potentially high nitrate content of drought-damaged corn in another problem for dairy

producers. Nitrates interfere with the oxygen-absorbing capacity of the cows' blood. This may lead to secondary problems, particularly interference with normal reproductive processes, resulting in poor ovulation and/or abortion.

Haenlein says at low levels nitrates can be tolerated or adjusted to, but at medium and high levels they become increasingly dangerous. In extreme cases of nitrate poisoning, cattle may die.

For these reasons, when using drought-stressed corn for silage, he cautions farmers to be alert for the presence of brown nitrous oxide gas seeping out of the silo and flowing down — the gas is heavier than air.

If a producer must feed high nitrate silage, the specialist says it must be diluted with other, safer feeds, such as hay and grain.

He suggests dairy farmers follow these guidelines when using drought-stressed corn, to avoid nitrate problems in silage:

\*If there is a rain, wait three to five days before chopping drought-stressed corn silage, because nitrate levels are higher in the plant directly after rain.

\*Consider raising the cutterbar on the chopper 12 inches up the

stalk. Nitrates are more concentrated in the lower part of the plant, so by doing this, you can leave more nitrates in the field.

\*Don't feed freshly chopped corn silage to cattle.

\*Wait at least 30 days before feeding silage from the silo. The fermentation process will help dissipate the nitrates in the silage.

\*Before feeding, have a sample

of the silage analyzed **QUANTITATIVELY** for nitrate content.

The ideal moisture content for making corn silage is 65-70 percent. Normally this occurs about the time the lower half of the leaves are browning and the tips of the kernels in the center of the ear have a black layer.

Under drought stress when corn

has no ears, over half of the leaves on the plant may be "fired." As long as the upper leaves are still green, Haenlein says the plant will likely respond to rainfall by recovering a normal moisture content of 75-70 percent. He suggests farmers apply the following squeeze test to get a general idea of silage moisture in the field.

## Case, UAW cooperate on rebate plan

RACINE, Wis. — JI Case and the United Auto Workers (UAW) today announced a special rebate program which passes negotiated savings directly to Case customers.

As part of recent labor negotiations, Case and the UAW will provide rebates of \$3,000 (U.S.) per unit on selected Case agricultural and construction equipment models purchased over a two-month period, beginning Sept. 1.

Case and union officials expect this rebate program to stimulate sales and increase production of equipment manufactured at Case plants in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa

and Wisconsin.

"Unlike other recent wage and benefit restraint agreements, this plan breaks new ground because it is designed to directly benefit the customer," says Ralph C. Wagner, senior vice president, corporate relations, for JI Case.

Rebates apply to the purchase of new Case 90 and 94 Series two- or four-wheel-drive farm tractors over 100 horsepower. Construction equipment rebates apply to purchases of new Case 580D and Super D loader/backhoes, models W18 and W20 wheel loaders, model 850 crawler dozers and models 850 and 855 crawler loaders.

After customers have secured

their best deal from local Case dealers, and taken advantage of any available Case financing programs, they will receive a \$3,000 check from Case and the UAW. This sum also can be applied directly to the purchase price of the equipment. The rebate offer applies to eligible models purchased in the U.S. and Canada, but is not applicable to governmental agencies.



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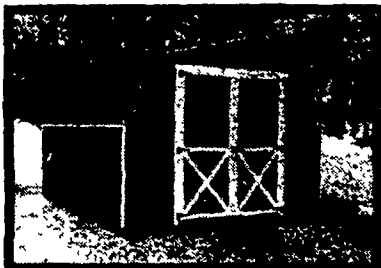
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