

Economics of Baled Silage
 In more than 20 different trials conducted over a five-year period, round bale silage (when properly done) results in storage losses consistently below 5 percent of the initial crop yield. This compares with typical losses of 25 percent for round hay bales stored outside, on the ground without covers.

The baled silage system costs about \$5 per bale (\$3 for plastic and \$2 for machinery). Producers that typically bale less than 300 bales per year should consider custom hiring the bales made because that number of bales does not offset the initial cost of the wrapping machine. Custom wrapping rates vary from \$6 to \$8 per bale including the plastic.

Another big consideration with baled silage is the higher quality compared with baled hay. Alfalfa baled and wrapped at 50 percent moisture and 22 percent crude protein. However, alfalfa left in the same field until it was baled at 18 percent moisture had only 18 percent crude protein. The difference in quality was attributed to leaf loss with longer field curing.

Another benefit of baled silage is the very short wilt time which means harvesting can be done without as much concern for rain and closer to the optimum maturity stage for the type of livestock being fed. With hay, producers frequently wait one to two weeks after optimum maturity stage in the spring trying to avoid rainy conditions.

These findings assume that baled silage has been made correctly. Here are the four biggest factors ensuring success:

- Four layers of plastic on each bale (two isn't enough).
- Bales need to be wrapped the same day they are baled.
- Tight bales that are between 45 and 65 percent moisture.
- Keep wrapped bales tightly sealed.

—Mike Collins,
 Univ. of Kentucky

Forage Variety Trials Report Available

The 1999 Penn State "Forage

Variety Trials Report" is now available, for free, at your county extension office. This year's report contains variety performance information on alfalfa, red clover, and many cool-season grass species. If you will be seeding forages during the next year, this report will be a valuable asset in your species/variety selection process.

Forages Help Keep Cows Healthy

The principle consequence of having lactating cow rations that are high in grain and low in fiber (forages) is chronic acidosis.

Symptoms of Rumen Acidosis

- Variable but reduced dry matter

intake.

- Decreased passage time for feed in the gut (undigested grain in manure).

- Scarring of the rumen wall, eventually leading to "nutritional burn out."

- Milk fat depression.

- Laminitis (hemorrhage in the foot, sole abscesses, overgrown hooves).

Tips for avoiding Rumen Acidosis

- Build the ration from the forages upward. The healthiest rumen comes from meeting as much as possible of the nutrient needs of high producing cows from forage.

- Increase the chop length of forages incorporated into the TMR as much as possible.

- When feeding a TMR, do not feed hay separately if it can be avoided. You can not depend on all cows getting sufficient fiber if you feed it separately.

- If feeding grain separately from forages, feed the forage first.

- Feed concentrates 3-4 times per day.

- Steam up cows moderately before calving to adapt rumen microbes.

—Simon Kenyon
 Purdue Univ.

Others Want To Know!

Other forage producers want to know what you've tried or done to improve forage production or utilization on your farm. If it worked, great! But if it didn't work, others need to know that too! Do you have any new products or management practices that you want to share with your fellow Pennsylvania forage growers?

Please send your experiences to PFGC News, C/O Dr. Marvin Hall, Agronomy Dept., Penn State Univ., University Park, PA 16802 (mhh2@psu.edu).

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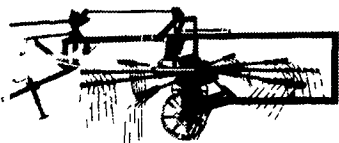
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