

# Dollars Can Be Saved When Ensiling Forages

GREENBAY, Wis. — As many producers begin harvesting this year's hay and grass crops, the Crop Storage Institute would like to remind you that there are many dollars to be saved during the silo filling process.

The dollar saving begins when the forage is cut. Maximizing the nutrient value of alfalfa in the first cut of the year requires a slightly earlier cut date than in subsequent cuttings. According to Jim Shroyer with Kansas State, "On established stands, the first cutting should be made when regrowth at the crown is apparent. This occurs before bloom." The rule of thumb for subsequent cuttings is to cut when the plant is at about 10 percent bloom. Earlier cuts will result in low yields and thin stands.

The second place to keep a close eye is on the wilt of the plant. Wilting a grass forage too much results in leaf loss, which can be quite costly. Ensuring that the plant is not wilted any more than for your recommended storage technique can save thousands of dollars. Forages that are wilted to the levels required by tower silos, bunkers, or bags will typically have in-field dry matter losses of 5 percent, and the in-field losses of dry baled forage will typically be 20 percent, and will increase if the crop becomes too dry.

In ensiled forages the primary concern needs to be ensuring that proper filling techniques are used when filling storage structures. According to University of Wisconsin studies average dry matter losses during storage in bunkers are 17 percent, in silage bags 10-14 percent, and in tower silos 7 percent. In bunkers and bags these numbers are highly dependent on proper management during the filling process.

When filling bunkers common recommendations include packing in thin (6-inch) layers, using heavy or multiple packing tractors, slowing the delivery rate, and using the progressive wedge method. Paying careful attention to details in each of these areas can pay huge dividends in minimizing dry matter losses.

Also of note, a bunker must be covered with plastic and the plastic weighed down across the entire surface. Economic studies in this area have shown that for every one dollar spent in plastic, tires, and labor to cover a bunker, eight dollars are saved in dry matter losses and feed quality. A spreadsheet estimating bunker dry matter density is available from the University of Wisconsin at their extension Website, and the Crop Storage Institute by e-mail at [crop-storage@cs.com](mailto:crop-storage@cs.com).

Filling silage bags

can be just as management intensive. When finished filling the bag, a smooth exterior surface is desired. This is thought to be a sign of a well-packed bag that has most of the oxygen excluded from it. This can be achieved by ensuring that the tension cables remain tight enough on the bagging unit. Because many different bagging systems and manufacturers exist, see your bag dealer for proper management instructions.

Proper management during the filling process with a tower silo is less management intensive. It is recommended that the silo be filled as quickly as possible. With high volume blowers, tower silos are now being filled at over 100 tons/hour. This fast filling process helps to exclude oxygen from the feed mass, thereby reducing dry matter losses.

While bags and bunkers require a higher level of management than tower silos, it is important to closely monitor any filling process. This is the time to ensure that you are minimizing dry matter losses that can quickly accumulate. A producer who harvests 1000 tons of forage worth \$30 a ton, loses \$300 for every 1 percent of dry matter loss. It is clear that filling management makes a difference in the bottom line.



Thursday, September 18

Maryland Pasture Walk, Steve Stoltzfus Farm, Clinton County, (570) 726-3798 or (814) 355-6817.

Thursday, October 2

Maryland Pasture Walk, Craig Leggett Farm, Boonsboro, Md. (301) 791-1304.

Friday, October 10

Northern Piedmont Beef Cattle and Forage Conservation Field Day, Hill Crest Farm, Delaplane, Va. 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. (540) 342-7950.

Saturday, October 11

Southeast Ohio Beef and Forage Field Day, Eastern Ohio Resource Development Center, Caldwell 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (740) 432-9300.

Saturday, October 18

Hay Processing Field Day, David Fink, Heidel Hollow Farm, Germanville, Lehigh County, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. (610) 767-2409.

Thursday, November 6

Maryland Pasture Walk, Brownsville, Md. (301) 791-1304.

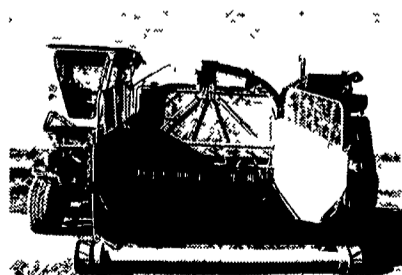
## AG-BAG INTERNATIONAL LTD.



Round Bale Tuber



6'-10' Ag-Baggers



10' & 12' Ag-Baggers for Trucks  
4-7 tons per minute  
Up to 600 tons per bag (12 x 300)

**CUSTOM BAGGING AND TUBING  
LARGE RENTAL FLEET**

**CALL TOLL FREE  
877-412-4224**

**NEW AND RENTAL  
MACHINE SALES  
BAGS & BUNKERS  
COVER IN STOCK**

**ROLLERS AND HAMMERMILL RENTALS**

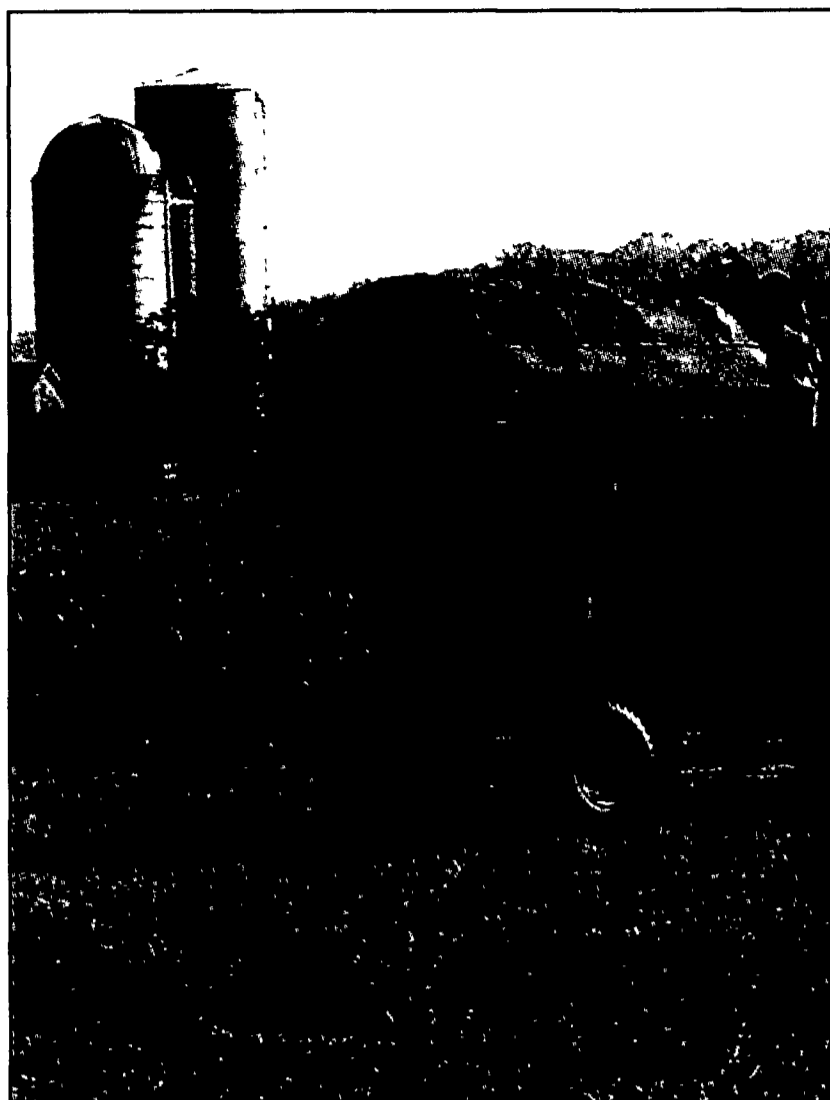


**Agri-Service LLC  
Rental & Custom Services**

14137 Pennsylvania Ave. ~ Hagerstown, MD 21742  
(301) 665-9333 or TOLL FREE (877) 412-4224

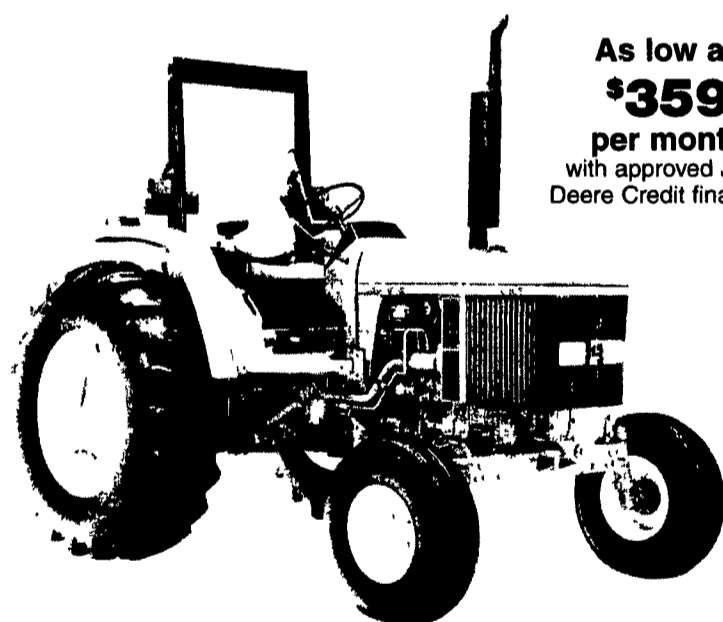
**Lancaster Farming's Classified Ads Get Results!**

# Think Safety



Before the start of harvest season may be the best time to talk to your family about farm safety. The photographer captured this scene on Rt. 222 south of Willow Street during the Solanco Fair last September. National Farm Safety and Health Week runs Sept. 21-27. For more information, visit [www.nsc.org/farmsafe.htm](http://www.nsc.org/farmsafe.htm). Photo by Andy Andrews, editor

## Step up to John Deere Reliability!



As low as  
**\$359**  
per month  
with approved John  
Deere Credit financing

- New 100-hp 6403 and 110-hp 6603 Series Tractors with John Deere 4.5- and 6.8-L PowerTech™ engines
- Smooth-shifting 9-speed synchronized transmission
- Spacious, open-operator platform
- Available in 2WD and MFWD models
- Independent 540/1,000-rpm PTO
- Up to 15 gpm hydraulic flow



See us for details and a test drive, today!

## LEHIGH AG EQUIPMENT, INC.

6670 Rupperville Road Allentown, PA 18106  
**610-398-2553 or 1-800-779-3616**

Hours: Mon-Fri 7:00 to 5:30 Saturday 7:30 to 3:00  
We Ship Parts Same Day To Your Farm



**Solid. Stable. Still John Deere.**