

Making best silage: Top tips for good clamp management

Good clamp management can improve daily milk output by 3 litres a cow.



For optimum results in the clamp:

- Cut the crop in dry weather. If possible cut on a sunny day as the sun helps the wilting process and increases sugar concentrations.
- Crops above 25% DM should be chopped to approx 25mm (1in). Crops below 25% DM should be chopped to approx 35mm (1.4in).
- To avoid soil and manure contamination, which can cause poor fermentation, and spoilage leave 7.5-10cms (3-4ins) of stubble when you cut.
- Applying good wilting practices should produce circa 25-30% DM content in 12-24 hours. Wilting can be speeded up if the grass is spread and conditioned. It is important to remember that over-wilting will increase dry matter losses.
- Adequate rolling is essential to ensure good compaction and the effective expulsion of air.
- Clamps containing high DM crops will require thinner layers and additional rolling to ensure good compaction and the expulsion of air.
- When feeding out, remember to keep the clamp face tidy. This will slow forage deterioration, reduce waste and the onset of aerobic deterioration. Consider using a block cutter to maximise your crop.
- An early cut will reduce yield but will improve silage quality and speed of the regrowth such that the total yield of grazed and conserved forage per hectare per year will be greater.
- Under commercial silage making conditions, IBERS cites that total dry matter losses, from clamp silage, of 25% can be expected from field to feedout, whilst in-silo losses of 5 to 18% are typical. Losses of this order represent a significant cost making it even more important to implement good clamp management practices.

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