



PLANNING FOR 1ST CUT GRASS SILAGE

At this time of year, the focus turns to securing fodder for the following autumn-winter period and there is always an opportunity to improve on silage quality. Grass typically utilises 2 units of Nitrogen (N) per day for growth, averaged from date of application to date of mowing. Following a cold, dry April and based on our GrassWatch results, it is evident N uptake has been low in grass compared to previous years. This point is particularly relevant on farms that have used a high rate of N (+ 85 units/acre) for their first cut silage and intend on cutting in mid-May. This year, it is particularly important to pay close attention to the level of N in grass pre-ensiling. A pre-ensilability test should be performed several days in advance of the intended cutting date, to allow time for additional N to grow out of grass and to give yourself a better chance of cutting during the right weather window.



SEVEN STEPS TO MAKING HIGH QUALITY SILAGE:

1. The person filling and rolling the pit has the largest influence on silage quality.
2. Ensure the pit is built from the base of the silage slab up, rather than from the back wall to the front, this ensures the loader operator shakes out the silage more evenly, compacts the pit more efficiently and reduces the amount of air captured in the pit.
3. Minimise soil contamination by rising the mowing height slightly, this will increase stubble height allowing for more airflow under the sward thus improving wilt and minimising aerobic spoilage.
4. Ideal silage dry matter is between 28% - 32% from a feed quality and preservation perspective.
5. Cut in bright, sunny weather with cool nights to maximise the sugar content of grass, where conditions are not ideal, it is recommended to use a tedder to reduce wilting time and boost sugar concentration.
6. Putting the cover on a silage pit is paramount to the overall silage quality, ideally use two covers and maintain an excellent seal on the edges and weigh down the top and sides well.
7. Use Ecosyl (liquid or powder) silage additive to maximise the fermentation rate and compensate for the difficulties that can arise while making top quality silage. If weather or harvesting conditions are not ideal, Ecosyl is a perfect safety net for a wide range of scenarios.



TOP TIPS FROM OUR TEAM

Dr. David Lawrence is our Ruminant Support Specialist and is a familiar face to many customers. From a suckler beef and sheep farm in Carlow, David brings a wealth of knowledge to the Brett's Technical Team at an academic and practical level. David Lawrence holds a PhD in Animal Nutrition from UCD, and his thesis was entitled "An Examination of Concentrate Feeding Strategies and Grass Sward Management for Autumn Calving Dairy Herds". David has a fantastic ability to apply science at an everyday level, on the livestock farms he visits, to improve productivity and profitability.



David's one piece of advice that applies to all livestock farming is **"you cannot accurately manage what you don't measure"**. Measurement is a key component in every aspect of livestock production, including target weight gains, milk recording, fertility, grass growth, forage quality and soil sampling. Data collection on any farm is essential for improving overall efficiency and profitability. Understanding individual animal performance will improve both nutritional strategies and breeding decisions, resulting in a more sustainable and profitable herd in the long term. An understanding of soil fertility and grass growth will improve the cost and quality of forage offered to livestock and will help to determine a realistic stocking rate for an individual farm. The key focus of the Ruminant Support Service is to improve production efficiency for our customers and to deliver practical advice and nutritional solutions.

Key tips for a successful breeding season

During this critical early breeding period, our Ruminant Support Specialists have some advice for dairy and suckler farmers breeding cows:

- Monitor your cows' bulling activity regularly (at least 4 times per day) and use visual heat detection aids.
- Measure and keep a record of the dates and tag numbers of cows bulled, and bulls used if using AI.
- Manage cows that are not showing heats, by identifying them early, scanning them and implementing an appropriate intervention or treatment programme.

BRETT'S GRASS SEED RANGE

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NEW 2021 Grass Seed Brochure

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