



## SILAGE BUDGETING

The wet autumn brought on the early housing of livestock on many farms and as a result there has been a lot of silage consumed to date.

We're still in early December yet our technical team, while conducting silage budgets, has reported a worrying trend in the quantity and quality of silage available on some farms.

Teagasc reported in October that 12% of farmers surveyed in the South East were deemed to have a deficit of silage and a further 20% of are at potential risk of having tight silage stocks.

The best advice is to act early by conducting a fodder budget. Our technical team is available to help but please have your stock numbers to hand and an assessment of how many tons of silage are in the yard.

### Basic Tools for calculating the tons of silage in the yard:

#### Silage in Pit (based on 22% Dry Matter)

Length x breadth x settled height (metres)  
÷ 1.35 = total tonnes in pit

#### Silage Bales:

Number of bales x 0.8 t/bale  
= total tonnes of baled silage

If you find yourself in a deficit situation, it is important to act now. There are a number of options you can take to reduce the deficit:

- Offer additional meals to stock to reduce silage demand
- Start sourcing extra silage or fodder if available – with straw supplies being at an all-time low, buying Hay or Maize silage are prudent options
- Consider alternative options such as Beet or wet feeds but seek technical advice regarding a feed plan
- Bretts Fodder Stretcher Ration is carefully formulated to partially replace silage or increase the energy supply to stock on poor quality silage
- Sell unproductive stock e.g. cull cows, high cell count or lame milkers



## Silage Quality is Variable

Silage quality is typically lower than previous years. As always there is variability between yards and within yards but the most important thing is for you to know what you have in your own pit.

- This year we are seeing Dry Matter Digestibility (DMD) vary from the 50s to over 75% DMD so it is difficult to give broad recommendations. The feed value difference from 60% to 75% DMD is equivalent to 3-4 kgs of concentrate feed.
- Dry Matter is varying from 16% to almost 60% so both are very difficult to manage. Low DM (< 22% DM) silage has a low intake value and requires supplementation and the high Dry matter silage (> 35% DM) is very prone to heating at the pit face and potentially going off so monitor the pit face closely.
- Soil contamination: We have noticed a trend this autumn of higher Ash levels (7.5% of greater) which indicate that there is probably soil contamination due to the poor ground conditions at harvesting. Silage with 'high ash' values generally are high in Iron, Aluminium and Molybdenum and these three minerals 'lock up' the good minerals that stock require, such as copper and selenium. We are advising everyone to test their dry cow silage for minerals and also to increase the mineral feed rate for dry cows. If feeding Bretts PIP minerals increase from 100 grams/head/day to a minimum of 125 grams/head/day.
- The wet backend and the poor quality forage in many yards is starting to show with loss of condition or poor thrive. Body condition score cows and weigh weanlings. If silage quality is less than 67% then stock will require extra supplements over and above the normal levels. Ensure that stock are treated for parasites.



## Christmas Greetings 2023

Happy Christmas to you all for what we hope will be a joyful and peaceful holiday season with your family. It hardly seems like a year since last Christmas, and what a year we have all been through!

This year will not be remembered as a vintage one for farmers and it has certainly been difficult from a trading perspective. I think that most farmers would be happy working in an environment where commodity prices remain reasonably stable. Not so in 2023!

The record prices which we saw for milk and grain last year were short lived. Unfortunately, the global circumstances which propelled this inflation had a similar impact on input costs, especially fertilisers and feed ingredients.

As the year progressed, we saw a correction in these costs. However, the dramatic reductions in output prices have led to a tightening of margins all-round. High inflation,

inevitably followed by deflation is not an easy place to manage in any business. Hopefully the policy being pursued by the ECB and governments will get us back to a more stable economy.

I suppose the weather has been a bigger challenge for farmers this year. Continuous rain since June resulted in a very difficult harvest. We got the first load of winter barley on June 28th and the last load of grain on October 15th.

Nationally, we are down half a million tonnes on last year. It is a tribute to our growers that quality is excellent due to good agronomy practices, but winter cereal planting is well down due to wet ground conditions.

Thank you for your support and we look forward to a better 2024. Stay safe during the Christmas period and all the best for the New Year.

James J. Brett  
Group Managing Director

## Christmas/New Year Delivery Schedule 2023

In order to efficiently manage deliveries over the Christmas holiday period, we would ask that orders are placed by **Friday, December 15th**.



### Christmas/New Year Delivery Schedule 2023/24

Saturday December 23rd	LIMITED DELIVERIES
Sunday December 24th	CLOSED
Monday December 25th	CLOSED
Tuesday December 26th	CLOSED
Wednesday December 27th	CLOSED
Thursday December 28th	DELIVERIES
Friday December 29th	DELIVERIES
Saturday December 30th	LIMITED DELIVERIES
Sunday December 31st	CLOSED
Monday January 1st	CLOSED
Tuesday January 2nd	DELIVERIES

Brett Brothers Ltd.,  
Callan, Co. Kilkenny  
Tel: 056 7755300

Brett Brothers Ltd.,  
Windgap, Co. Kilkenny  
Tel: 051 648204

Brett Brothers Ltd.,  
Ardfinnan, Co. Tipperary  
Tel: 052 7466208

Brett Brothers Ltd.,  
Portlaw, Co. Waterford  
Tel: 051 387396