



DairyCo

BATH & WEST  
GRASSLAND UK

# GRASSLAND UK 2009 FACTSHEET

## Field to clamp: keeping the quality in forage

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When you take the mower out into a grass field, weather permitting, the crop should be in optimum condition for harvesting and you will have decided on whether to go for bulk or quality. But whichever is your aim, what you do once the mower goes in can have a big impact on the feed you end up with. Making consistently good quality grass silage can reduce concentrate feed requirements for dairy cows by 2kg/head/day.

For the best crop in the clamp:

- Cutting the crop in the dry and hopefully in the sun aids wilting and sugar concentrations.
- Higher dry matter crops (>25%) should be chopped to approx 20mm (0.8in). Lower DM crops (<25%) should be chopped to approx 35mm (1.4in).
- Leaving a 7-8 cm (3-4in) stubble avoids soil and manure contamination which can cause poor fermentation, spoilage and waste.
- Good wilting practices should ideally produce 25-30% DM content in 12-24 hours. Spreading and conditioning grass will speed up wilting. Remember over-wilting will result in dry matter losses.
- Rolling the clamp as grass comes in is essential as the packing effect from a normal tractor will only extend to 200mm (8in).
- Higher dry matter crops need more rolling to ensure its well consolidated and to avoid air causing poor fermentation.
- Keeping a tidy clamp face when feeding out will slow the forage deteriorating and reduce waste and the onset of secondary fermentation. Consider using a block cutter. Remember what every forkful of silage left on the floor is worth.
- Good silage making management can improve daily milk output by 3 litres a cow.
- Cutting an early crop will reduce yield/ha, however a second early cut can yield significantly more than a conventional second cut, resulting in higher yield/ha for two early cuts than two conventional cuts. This can also result in higher quality.
- Silage losses can be as high as 20%, 5% at harvest, 10% at ensiling and 5% at feed out. There is room for improvement and obvious financial benefits.

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