

Texas Dairy Matters

Higher Education Supporting the Industry

MANAGE SILAGE PILES

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Many dairy producers put up silage to use as a forage in dairy rations. To get the most value from that feed, manage the face of silage piles and discard spoiled silage.

To preserve the quality of silage piles, maintain a smooth face that is perpendicular to the floor of the silage pile. The smooth vertical face minimizes the surface area exposed to air, thus reducing spoilage. Typically remove 6-12 inches from the face per day to prevent the exposed silage from heating and spoiling. During warm, humid weather increase the removal rate to 18 inches or more to minimize spoilage.



When spoilage does occur, discard the spoiled silage.

As tight as margins can be on dairies it is hard to discard feed; however, studies have shown that milk production decreases when unstable ensiled feeds are fed. In one study with high moisture shelled corn, cows in mid-lactation produced 7 pounds of milk less per cow per day. In a study with steers, dry matter intake was reduced and the digestibility of organic matter, neutral detergent fiber and acid detergent fiber were all reduced. Any of these reductions could result in lower productivity.

Besides direct effects on milk production, feeding spoiled silage may impact herd profitability in other ways. There have been instances of increased abortion rates when cows were fed spoiled silage.

More recently feeding poorly fermented ensiled feeds has been theorized to be the cause of jejunal hemorrhage syndrome (**JHS**) or hemorrhagic bowel syndrome. In this disorder, sudden death occurs in cows. Sometimes the cows are found very weak, shocky and pale. They have a sharp drop in milk production, decreased fecal output, and may have blood in their stool. The fatality rate runs between 85-100 percent. On necropsy, sections of the small intestine are distended with large amounts of blood or blood clots found.

Get the most out of silage by properly maintaining the feed out face and discarding any spoiled forages. The initial loss from discarding spoiled feed is easily covered by preventing production losses, abortions and cow deaths.