

SILAGE---

Good Cow Feed



By Albert M. Lane, Agricultural Extension Service

Best Arizona Feeds Are The Roughages

The cow is primarily a converter of roughages. No other animal can take this type of feed and utilize it as efficiently. The best feeds in Arizona are roughage feeds—silage, hay, green feeds, and pasture.

An efficient feeding program or an efficient dairy program must be based on good roughages. Silage in this role plays a very definite part in a sound feeding program. During seasons of low production, silage is more economical than other roughages in utilizing the maximum feed value.

Ideal Roughage

The succulence of silage tends to improve the entire ration. And the high palatability and feed value make it an ideal roughage in any livestock ration.

Almost any type of forage can be ensiled if these precautions are taken:

1. Have a moisture content of 60 to 70 percent.
2. Have enough carbohydrate or sugar content to form the acids necessary for ensiling.



ANIMALS usually consume more total dry matter in the form of silage than in any other type of roughage.

3. Chop forage fine enough so it can be packed tightly into the trench.

Corn and sorghum ensiled at the proper stage of maturity make ideal silage crops. Hollow stemmed plants such as the small grains are more difficult to ensile because air is trapped in the hollow stems.

Wilt Alfalfa

Alfalfa for silage needs to be partially wilted before putting it into the silo. Less skill, however, is required in making grass or legume silage by the wilting method than in making good hay. And cantaloup can be ensiled quite satisfactorily by laying down a layer of straw and a layer of cantaloup and crushing together.

The high palatability of silage tends to increase feed consumption. Often an animal consumes more total dry matter in the form of silage than in other types of roughages.

Of the most common forages used for silage, hegari will yield 12 to 16 tons of silage per acre on good farm land, and corn 16 to 20 tons. When this silage is fed with alfalfa hay, barley, and cottonseed meal it equals 40 to 50 percent the feed value of alfalfa in a beef ration, and 35 to 40 percent of alfalfa in a dairy ration. Corn silage is equal in feeding

value to hegari and can be used where it out-yields hegari or fits better into the crop rotation.

Silage with proper supplementation can make up a large portion of a cattle ration. The University of Arizona beef ration has been fed at the daily rate of 25 lbs. of hegari silage, 5.3 lbs. of alfalfa hay, 5.5 lbs. of grain (barley and hegari), and 2 lbs. of cottonseed meal. Beef cattle on this ration gained 2.4 lbs. per day and dressed out 59.5 percent with a grade of choice.

Such a ration offers an excellent source of protein, vitamin A and phosphorus, plus an adequate carbohydrate level. In feeding a high level of silage in a ration it is necessary that these ingredients be present in the ration. Tests conducted at the Arizona Experiment Station indicate that such a ration produces as economical a gain as any other ration tested.

When a forage crop is ensiled in a large well-made silo, the losses of dry matter and digestible nutrients are slightly less than when the crop is made into hay or dry fodder. This is true for corn or sorghum silage as well as hay crops such as alfalfa.

Most silages, if properly made, have approximately the same feed value. Consequently, the forage that will produce the highest number of tons per acre is usually the best forage to ensile.

However, there are other factors to consider. Sometimes weather or other conditions prevent making good quality hay. Then it is better to ensile than to make hay.

Stock Like It!

Forages of low palatability can be converted to a form that is acceptable to livestock by ensiling. But remember that a silo will not make good feed out of poor forage.

The best method to reduce costs of butterfat or meat production is to use plenty of good roughage. Silage, properly made, will adequately fill this requirement.

SILAGE from a well made silo loses less dry matter and nutrients than when the crop is made into hay or dry fodder.

