

Theme 3: Fodder management and conservation

# FODDER CONSERVATION AND STORAGE



*A publication sponsored by the ICSIAPL project*



## Learning objectives

To conserve and store forages to preserve the nutritive value of the feed and avoid spoilage, appropriate practices, preparation of storage facilities and avoid storage losses

- Hay
- Haylage
- Silage

# Why conserve forages?

Conserved forages offer extra feed supplement to the ration  
Means of storage of excess forage for future use  
Preserves nutritive value of forage for longer period  
Provides consistent balanced diet throughout the year especially during deficit periods  
Assists with feed planning that allows farmers plan for their feed year-round.



# Factors affecting the quantity and quality of conserved forages

Forage species - resistant and fast-growing species allow for numerous harvests  
Leafiness  
Maturity stage - early or late timing in harvesting  
Harvesting technique - poor harvesting methods lead to poor utilization and losses in the ration.  
Climate - right conditions (temperature) should be maintained  
Foreign matter - In silage, presence of unwanted materials like manure or soil in hay or silage affect fermentation  
Storage - poorly made facilities cause losses



# Methods of forage conservation

Even as you consider various conservation methods, it is important to harvest forages at their optimum nutritional value.

Methods include:

- Drying (hay)
- Fermentation (silage & haylage)
- Dehydration (artificial drying / pelleting)



## Drying grass (wilting) to hay

The goal of haymaking is to produce a stable, high-quality animal feed with minimum expenditure.

Grazing animals on pasture is more ideal than making hay  
Hay is harvested and stored which requires manual labour and mechanization.

Hay utilizes the surplus forage pastures during peak growing times for use as feed during dry seasons.

Harvest and dry the forage (grass, legume or mixed hay) wisely and store them properly

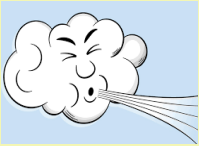


# When to make hay

Weather forecasts will assist to identify the ideal time of harvest

Deciding when to make hay is a critical decision:

- Should be based on an understanding of plant growth
- Harvesting should be done when there is a likelihood of several days of good haymaking weather



## Guidelines for drying hay

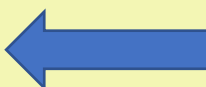
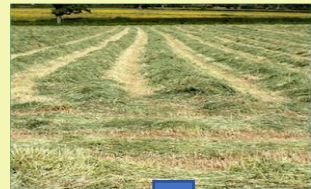
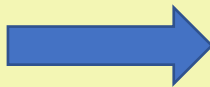
Turn the grass (tedding) to allow air and sun for even drying but avoid too much damage to leaves or leaves dropping (e.g., alfalfa).

Allow the grass to dry for 5 – 7 days in the field.

Bring the grass (rake) together in straight lines to reduce grass exposure to dew in the evening

Once grass are in straight lines start baling.

Bring the bales to a dry and secure storage area Well managed pasture, receiving enough rainfall, can be cut every 6-8 weeks.



# Methods of compacting hay

Compacting dry grass (hay) into bales (square, round)  
Hay is compacted to reduce storage space



# Storing dry grass (hay)

Store the hay so that feed quality is maintained (protect from rain and moisture) and expenditures minimized

Storage may be done:

- as long hay
- chopped hay
- baled hay (rectangular, big bales, round bales)



# Considerations when storing hay

Baling hay at lower dry matter content (below 80%) can cause moulding and heating.

Moisture content of hay is also affected by the size and density of the bale during storage.

Hay stored outside is affected by higher storage losses compared to hay kept in a store



## Fermentation - haylage

Haylage is an in between hay and silage making. For farmers who find it hard to dry grass to make hay, one can wilt the hay for a shorter period and package the grass for future use.

Haylage unlike silage is made under lower moisture conditions (estimated at between 40-50% dry matter).

Additive(s) such as (molasses) may be added to fasten fermentation process.

Haylage is only considered if one has machinery for heavy compaction



# Fermentation - Silage

Silage making has become popular among farmers because it:

- is simple to make
- is less weather dependent
- can be done repeatedly (after regrowth 6-8 weeks)

Silage can be made from maize crop, sorghum crop, legumes and grasses.

Main principle is to exclude air during the ensiling process, prevent air from entering the silage during storage and minimise losses and quality problems during feeding out.

Modern technologies, such as oxygen impermeable covers and additives, can greatly reduce surface losses - irrespective of storage method



**Note:** How to make silage: See module 2.3 Guidelines on silage making & module 2.4 Fermentation process



# Methods of storing silage

Silage can be stored above ground (horizontal or vertical), or in hillside pits (horizontal). Most common methods include:

- hillside pits
- above ground bunkers (clamp)
- in ground pits or trenches
- stack and bale silage

The system to be used depends on;

- capital available
- area available
- Topography
- equipment available
- Expertise
- personal preference



## Size and shape of silage storage

Long, deep, narrow pits are preferred over short, wide, shallow storages because these are easier to fill and compact progressively and minimise exposure to air when feeding out

The target removal rate should be to a depth of at least 15 cm/day, increasing to 30 cm/day for unstable silages such as maize. Removing 15–30 cm/day minimises aerobic spoilage, as silage is removed from the bunker or clamp, and the complete face of the silage bunker/clamp should be sliced at this depth every one or two days.



# Storage facilities for small holder silage

## Silo sizes for small holders

For properly compacted chopped forage material weighing 350 kg in a silo

1 m<sup>3</sup> (1×1×1 m): for one animal taking 10 kg silage/day

2 m<sup>3</sup> (2×1×1 m): for one animal taking 20 kg silage/day



## Amount of silage required

The table below shows amount of silage needed corresponding to herd size

Feeding category	Feeding for 180 days			Feeding for 300 days			Feeding for 365 days		
	Daily feed quantity			Daily feed quantity			Daily feed quantity		
Number of cows	20kg	30kg	40kg	20kg	30kg	40kg	20kg	30kg	40kg
1	3.6	5.4	7.2	6.0	9.0	12.0	7.3	11.0	14.6
2	7.2	10.8	14.4	12.0	18.0	24.0	14.6	21.9	29.2
3	10.8	16.2	21.6	18.0	27.0	36.0	21.9	32.9	43.8
4	14.4	21.6	28.8	24.0	36.0	48.0	29.2	43.8	58.4
5	18.0	27.0	36.0	30.0	45.0	60.0	36.5	54.8	73.0
6	21.6	32.4	43.2	36.0	54.0	72.0	43.8	66.0	87.6
7	25.2	37.8	50.4	42.0	63.0	84.0	51.1	77.0	102.2
8	28.8	43.2	57.6	48.0	72.0	96.0	58.4	88.0	116.8
9	32.4	48.6	64.8	54.0	81.0	108.0	65.7	99.0	131.4
10	36.0	54.0	72.0	60.0	90.0	120.0	73.0	110.0	146.0

**Note:** Units expressed in tonnes

# Packing density of silage

**Example:** From the table on the previous page we know that to feed 5 cows 20 kg of silage per day for a period of 300 days 30 tons of silage is needed.

To calculate the size of the storage for maize silage you divide 30 tons (= 30000 kg) with the packing density of the silage. ->  $30000 / 600 = 50 \text{ m}^3$  (or in case of a higher packing density  $30000 / 700 = 42.8 \text{ m}^3$ ).

If the width of the silage bunker is 1.5 meter and the height after compaction is a meter the length of silage bunker is  $50 \text{ m}^3 / (1.5 * 1) = 33.3$  meters.

If the forage material when harvesting is enough to make a 5 meter long silage bunker then you would require  $33.3 / 5 = 6.7$  bunkers. Practically you would make 7 bunkers of 5 meter (1.5 meter wide and 1 meter high).

Forage material	Weight (kg/ m <sup>3</sup> )
Fresh pasture	700-800
Wilted pasture	600-700
Maize	600-700
Sorghum	600-700

## Factors to consider to reduce spoilage during storage

Pit design - create pits with narrow width to reduce chances of air entering during feed out.

Avoid contaminating silage with soil and manure when compacting. Type of sealing material - polythene used should be strong to reduce chances of damage to the seal.

After heavy compaction of silage bunkers a (heavy) soil cover is still of great importance to remove remaining air (oxygen).

Always leave the face of the silage silo clean during handling.

Slow feeding speed often causes a lot of spoilage in the silage face due to heating and secondary fermentation.

# Dehydration – pelleting/artificial drying

Dehydration involves removal of moisture (water) from feeds to preserve it for a long period of time.

Drying can be done manually by small scale farmers but for large production a mechanical dryer is required.

For pelleting a feed pellet machine will be required.

In Ugandan context, dehydration as a means of conservation has no priority.

The process of drying is very efficient, although expensive Lucerne (alfalfa) is mostly dried artificially.



## Reasons for storing forages

To create reserve for the dry season.

To utilize excess forage during rainy season.

To protect against climatic factors.

To avoid deterioration and spoilage caused by:

- Water and heat
- Pests and insects
- Fungal invasion
- Chemical damages



# Storing pellets

Dehydrated feeds such as pellets and cubes are easier to store and maintain their quality compared to wet feed.

They are mostly stored in either bales or bags.

Ensure moisture is less than 10% (i.e., >90% dry matter content).



# Aspects of a good storage facility for forage

Proper construction - needs to be covered all round

Adequate space - according to needs of the farm

Easy accessibility - easy loading and offloading

Location - close to the cows feeding area

Security against - animals, intruders and fire



# Take home messages

## Storing hay

Dry feeds are easier to store and maintain quality compared to wet feed. Some of these dry feeds include pellets, cereals and hay.

They are mostly stored in either (hay) bales or sacks.

Ensure dry matter content during hay baling is above 80% to reduce further losses during storage. Baling hay at lower dry matter content (below 80%) can cause moulding and heating.

Maximum moisture content of hay is also related to the size and density of the bale during storage.

Hay stored outside suffer higher storage losses compared to hay kept in a store.

Consider the following to reduce spoilage during storage and at feed out:

- Pit design - narrow pits makes it easier to maintain feeding speed and reduce chances of air entering the silage during feed out
- Contamination - with soil or manure during ensiling when compacting should be avoided
- Type of sealing - polythene used should be new and strong to reduce chances of damage
- Compaction - heavy compaction of silage (or haylage) is of great importance to remove air (oxygen)
- Covering - add weight on top of silage for extra compaction
- Feed face and silage handling - farmer handling the silage should remove all loose silage material
- Feeding speed - low feeding speed often causes a lot spoilage







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## About the ICSIAPL Project

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