



SILAGE DECISIONS FACTSHEET



TIPS ON IMPROVING SILAGE YIELD

Yield is not the only or necessarily the highest priority when making silage, because there is a compromise between silage quality and yield when cutting date is delayed to achieve a bulkier crop.

It is vital to make enough to meet animal demand through the desired feeding period, as buying in bulk feeds (including straw) can be more expensive than making a high yield of a lower quality silage and balancing it with concentrates. Silage requirements for different stock classes are detailed on the Cutting Date factsheet in this series.

Factors which can increase silage yield

Decision	Impact	Other considerations
Reseeding	High	New varieties and short term leys with Italian ryegrass will yield more than old varieties and weed grasses
Last grazing	Moderate	Grazing into March will impact on yields
Soil pH	Moderate	Grass will yield less in acidic soils
Nitrogen	Moderate/High	Too little N reduces yield, but a cut in rate in a single year may result in low impact because of soil nitrogen reserves
P and K	Low, particularly in the short term	Soil reserves make this a long term issue
Sulphur fertiliser	Low	Can replace some N fertiliser and has an impact on yield where deficient
Weeds	Moderate	Weeds such as docks have a high demand for nutrients and reduce grass yield
Delaying cutting date	High	But a compromise on quality is necessary
Silage additives	Low	Some products claim to reduce clamp losses. Select carefully according to circumstances
Silage wrap	Low-moderate	Six layers of wrap can reduce dry matter losses during fermentation
Clamping	Low-moderate	Only using one sheet or poor weighting of sheets are likely to see a layer of crop spoil reducing the amount of silage available for feeding stock

*See the relevant factsheets in this series for further information on all of the above.

Factsheet produced by Jessica Buss, BGS and Alan Hopkins, GES Consulting.

Please note: Any changes to management should be researched thoroughly and tried cautiously, bearing in mind any restrictions in force, such as environmental stewardship scheme rules. BGS and EBLEX cannot be held liable for any losses.