

Ag-Bag[®] Advantage

A publication on management practices and tips using the Ag-Bag[®] sealed storage system.

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Feed costs **squeeze** Milk prices

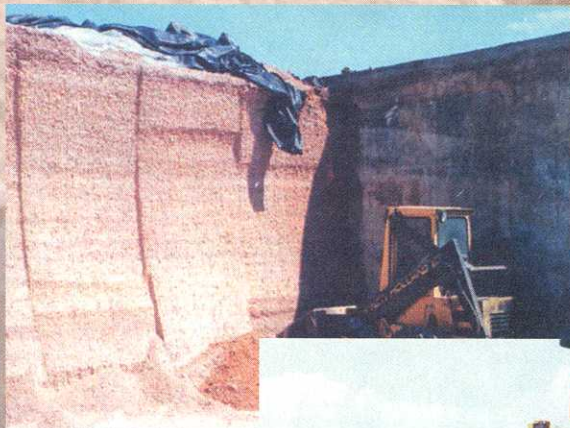
by Jim DeMatteo, Animal Nutritionist

What are you going to do, now that feed costs are rising and milk price is falling? The current cost/price squeeze is generating questions like these in coffee shops and dairy offices across America. So, should you behave any differently in response to these challenging economics? Should you respond as usual, or do challenging times require innovative thinking and ACTION.

Sometimes "action" means taking a fresh look at what you've done for years, reevaluating and making appropriate changes that will improve performance. Consider the process of preserving and feeding silages. The process is really quite simple.

I was recently on a dairy in the upper Midwest that did an excellent job in bunk silo face management. Their bunk silo faces were as "straight as a wall". Certainly this practice reduced the dairy's losses from secondary fermentation due to face exposure. The interesting point was, that there was as much "total-overall" surface exposure on that dairy as I see on many poorly managed faces. They had *so many "exposed" faces* - so much area that had unlimited oxygen available - that nutrients were sure to be consumed by aerobic microbes that were intended to be consumed by cows. Maximum Milk production/reproduction could never occur because the aerobic microbes got there first - before the silage made it to

the cows mouth. Worse yet, when you feel heat, that means that bacteria and yeasts have approached the 100,000,000 cfu (colony forming units) per gram of silage threshold. Some of these molds will produce mycotoxins that can impact cow health. We need to make sure not to fool ourselves into believing that a nice "straight-as-a-wall" face provides the same



protection as an Ag-Bag. Compare the "straight-as-a-wall" surface area of your bunk, to the 9-12 foot diameter of an Ag-Bag, and you will have significantly more surface area exposed to secondary fermentation.

In order to capitalize on the great job you do in producing quality forages, you need to do an excellent job of providing an environment for excellent fermentation to take place.



