

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".

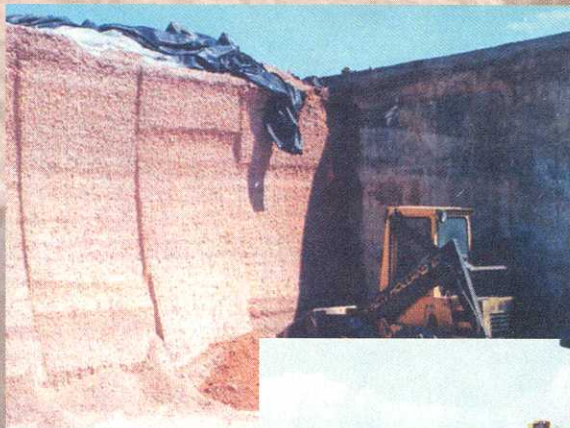
Certainly this practice reduced the dairy's losses from secondary fermentation due to face exposure. The

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.



The fermentation process reviewed...

1. Microorganisms ferment the soluble carbohydrates in the forage.
2. The products of this fermentation process are volatile fatty acids, lactic and dicarboxylic acids.
3. The buildup of these products of the microorganism's digestion drops the pH to 3.8 – 5.0.
4. Microbial growth is inhibited at these pH levels.
5. Anerobic (without oxygen) conditions = stability.

To enhance this whole fermentation process... to capitalize on mother nature's "pickling process" we need to :

1. Start with excellent forage at the correct moisture and stage of maturity.
2. Cut the forage at the correct length to pack well and enhance rumen health.
3. Eliminate oxygen – fill fast... and pack it well!
4. Feedout properly... keep surface area to a minimum... if you feel heat... you have waste.

I recently saw a bumper sticker that stated... "I'm not lazy, I just did it right the first time". As you evaluate how to approach this latest cost/price squeeze, consider doing it right the first time. It will



save you time, and it will save you money. When compared to conventional bunker silos, Ag-Bags will... work better to eliminate oxygen through speed of fill and *proper* packing.... help forage remain stable until feeding due to proper/complete sealing... and feed out with a lower secondary fermentation loss. The waste that you actually see (in any storage system) is just the tip of a huge iceberg of loss that you don't see.

The VALUE of FEEDOUT

The Ag-Bag system is a total bagging solution. Each step of the process ensures quality feed for your herd. Good feed begins with proper bagging and quality inoculant. Once the feed is in the bag, proper feedout is necessary to maintain the nutritional value of the feed and utilize all the feed available. The Ag-Bag offers both nutritional preservation and optimum usage of the feed through proper feedout.



I recently visited with a dairy near Cimmeron, Kansas and spoke to Tina Counterman about the value of feedout. Tina has worked on the

dairy for several years and fed thousands of tons out of the Ag-Bag silage bags. She says, "***I have fed out of both bags and bunkers and I can definitely feed out of a bag faster, more efficiently and more safely than a bunker.*** There is much less waste out of the bag because you can get right in there and scoop out every bit." We also spoke about the amount of face exposure with the bags compared to the bunker. Tina said, "I feel there is less waste out of the bag because there is less face exposure. You get more value out of the Ag-Bag."

To learn how you can benefit from the Ag-Bag system, schedule an appointment to evaluate the advantages and value of feeding bagged silage. Ag-Bag offers a full line of silage bagging equipment, Ag-Bag Plus® inoculant, and Tri-Dura® Bags with parts and service to keep your business profitable.

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