

## Extending The Silage Crop

With the cold and dry spring, grass growth has been reduced this year and this raises concerns about the amount of silage that will be available for next winter. If grass is in short supply for silage making it can be extended by the inclusion of other feeds at ensiling.

- Brock potatoes will increase the bulk and energy value of the silage but will decrease the protein content. Potatoes do not provide fibre so will not contribute to the roughage in the ration. Ensilage at 5 parts grass to 1 part clean potatoes (soil will give a poor fermentation quality) in layers of 0.6 m grass and 0.15 m potatoes or mixed through.
- Brewers grains/distillers grains (draff) can be purchased a day or two before the grass is ensiled and packed into a layer (about 1 m deep) at the bottom of the pit. Don't leave the draff too long before adding the grass or losses will be large, draff provides digestible fibre but not the long roughage effect.
- Molassed sugar beet feed also provides digestible fibre and has a high energy value and can be scattered over the grass during ensilage. It will help to retain effluent and the sugars may also improve fermentation.
- A complete alternative feed can be made by ensiling draff with molassed sugar beet feed (1t draff: 150 kg MSBF) to produce Grainbeet. This material is effective as a silage replacer (it has around 300 g DM/kg, 11.5 MJ ME/kg DM and 185 g CP/kg DM). Long roughage will still be required in most rations, although Grainbeet has been used successfully as the sole diet for bulls.
- Producers who grow cereals could also consider making whole crop cereal silage as an alternative forage. Harvested slightly earlier than for grain with a forage harvester fitted with a cracker, this would allow the sowing of other forage crops for use through the winter such as stubble turnips or forage rape

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