

Make silage for more milk in dry season

INTRODUCTION

You can conserve green forage at the time of surplus. This can be used during the dry season when there is serious feed shortage.

Napier grass, sorghum, surplus maize and sugar cane tops can all be stored as silage. Prepare silage from excess forage when it is still green and of good quality, and during a dry spell.



SMALL-SCALE SILAGE MAKING

Step 1.

Prepare a shallow pit, preferably on slightly sloping ground. The depth of the pit should decrease from the higher side of the sloping ground to the lower side giving a wedge-like shape. Dimensions of the pit depend on the amount of forage to be stored.

As a rule of thumb 72 cubic feet (2 cubic metres) holds 1000 kg (or 20 bags) of fresh, chopped material. This requires 2030 litres of molasses and 10 metres of **polythene sheeting**.

Step 2.

Chop the forage to be ensiled to lengths of about 1 inch long using either a panga or a chaff cutter.

Step 3.

Place polythene sheeting over the sides and floor of the pit so that the forage does not come into contact with soil.

Step 4.

Empty 1 bag of about 50 kg of chopped material into the plastic lined pit and spread into a thin layer. Repeat this till the pit is filled to 1/3 (6 bags).

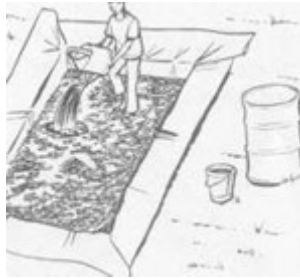
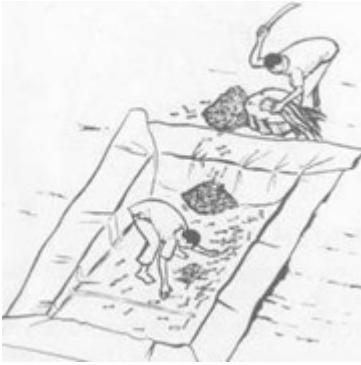
Step 5.

Dilute 1 litre of molasses (that is about 1 kg Kasuku tin full) with 3 litres (3 Kasuku tins) of water. Sprinkle this mixture over the layer of chopped forage. Use a garden sprayer to distribute the solution evenly.

This helps to feed the micro-organisms to make the silage acid quickly, which will prevent rotting.

Step 6.

Press the forage down with your feet or a suitable weight (e.g. a drum full of water) to force out as much air as possible. This will prevent fungi attacking and destroying the forage.



Step 7.

Add another bag of the chopped feed, sprinkh diluted molasses and compact the forage again. Repeat this process of adding forage, diluted molasses and compacting until the pit filled in a doom shape.

Step 8.

Cover the pit after a final pressing with polythene sheeting to prevent water seeping into the silage and dig a small trench around the sides of the pit.

Step 9.

Then, cover the pit with soil: a layer of 24 inches (in the case of wet, fresh fodder) up to 36 inches (in the case of more dry forage) of soil to keep the air out and to prevent damage of the polythene by rain, birds and rodents.

Step 10.

The conservation of the material by microorganisms takes a couple of weeks. Thereafter, it can be fed, but you better leave it until a time of feed shortage. With good sheeting and enough soil on it, the silage can be kept well for 1 - 2 years.

Step 11.

Open the pit from the lower side of the slope. Remove enough material for one day's feeding, and then cover the open end again.



HOW MUCH TO FEED?

- A grade cow may eat up to 30 kg of silage per day.
- To ensure that the milk has no silage smell, feed after milking or at least 3 hours before milking.

BENEFITS

- A store of feed for the dry season.
- Animals remain in good condition.
- More milk at a better price.
- Thus more income in the dry season.

