

Is Corn Silage a Potential Cash Crop for Corn Growers?

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Corn silage should contain 30-38% dry matter, 2.5-3.5% crude protein and 15-20% TDN. Converting this to a dry matter basis, it would contain approximately 8.5-15% protein and 50-60% TDN. Crude fiber content on wet silage would probably be 6-8% or on a dry matter basis, 24-30%.

Corn silage is a mixture of grain and roughage combined into one material, both needed in a dairy ration. The value of corn grain in silage is equal on dry matter basis, to grain from any other source. Silage yields of 20 tons per acre with 35 bushels of grain would contain about 100 pounds of grain per ton valued at about \$2. Yields of 15 tons of silage per acre containing 109 bushels would have 400 pounds of grain per ton worth \$8. In Florida, expected yields are about 12 tons per acre with about 60 bushels of corn.

The roughage portion of corn silage is about equal in quality to that of good grasses. As the grain content increases the roughage content decreases. In a ton of silage containing 30% dry matter you are getting 600 pounds of dry feed. If 200 pounds of this is grain then you are getting 400 pounds of forage.

The fiber content of corn silage is usually 24% on a dry matter basis. Little difficulty is experienced in maintaining butterfat if the silage is not too finely ground. Palatability of corn silage is good if good material is put into the silo, air is excluded and it is fed out of the silo at a rate fast enough to prevent spoilage of exposed surfaces. Urea added to corn silage at 10 pounds per ton will increase its protein value by 1.3% on a wet basis. There is a slight decrease in palatability when urea is used. The feeding value of silage can be enriched by the addition of grain, citrus pulp or molasses.

A basis for buying and selling silage should take into account its feeding value. This should include the amount of dry matter, grain and forage per ton. Dry matter can easily be determined in any laboratory. The amount of grain can be estimated in the field prior to harvest and there are a number of methods for making this determination. There is also the possibility of selling on the basis of laboratory analyses.

An agreement should be binding on both parties. It should indicate the quality of material desired and some adjustment in price if it is above or below this desired quality. A time schedule to be followed should be arranged. There are other considerations that should be included but one that should be included is trust and patience by both parties.

If any business enterprise is to be successful, both buyer and seller must receive full value and be satisfied with the transactions. If either is on the losing end, the operation is doomed to failure.

There seems to be a place for corn silage in Florida. There are dairymen that would like to feed it but don't want to grow corn. There are, I think, corn growers that are not interested in milking cows. This appears to offer an opportunity to both parties.