

MAKING SILAGE OUT OF DRY CORN

Corn chopped for silage right now might be too dry. What can we do to make it more suitable?

Last week a couple farmers telephoned me, concerned that the corn they were chopping for silage was too dry. They knew that dry silage often heats and molds, lowering its energy and protein digestibility. This happens primarily because dry silage is difficult to pack, which allows more oxygen to remain imbedded inside the silage.

Many corn fields are quickly getting too dry for best silage making. Adding water to increase moisture content is next to impossible. It takes about 7 gallons of water for each ton of silage to raise moisture content just one point. Even if you have enough water the chopped corn can't absorb it fast enough to do any good.

Another solution may be to blend a wetter feed, like fresh alfalfa, forage sorghum, or green soybeans with dry corn. Or maybe some later planted corn that's still quite green. It can be tricky to get the right combination, but it can produce excellent silage.

Your main goal must be to minimize oxygen in your silage. Another way to help accomplish this is to adjust knives to cut finer. Also, add extra packing weight, even if the chopped corn seems to spring right back up at you. I also suggest saving your wettest forage for the top layer. This helps add extra packing weight and gets better sealing. If you do have water handy, apply it to this top layer for even more packing weight. And, of course, always cover dry silage with plastic to prevent outside air from seeping in.

Get the moisture right for the best silage. But if it is too dry, chop extra fine, pack well, and cover with plastic for best results.

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