

## SOYBEANS AND SUNFLOWERS AS FORAGE AFTER WHEAT

Would you like to try something a little different as a forage crop after wheat? How about considering soybeans or sunflowers?

Soybean hay can have nearly the same protein and energy content as alfalfa hay. Livestock eat soybean hay quite well, but they often separate out and refuse to eat some of the coarser stems. Grinding the hay should reduce this refusal.

Harvest soybean hay after pods begin to fill but before leaves drop off from yellowing and definitely before a freeze. Soybean hay is slow to dry because bean stems are coarser than alfalfa stems, so be sure to crimp them as you cut. Also, soybean leaves crumble easily when dry, so rake and bale carefully to reduce leaf loss.

Both soybeans and sunflowers can make good silage. Feeding value varies, but if you do a good job of silage making and get a good fermentation, soybeans have about 80 percent of the feeding value of alfalfa haylage and sunflowers have about 80 percent of the feeding value of corn silage.

Always use a silage inoculant and add about 30 to 50 pounds of grain per ton of silage when filling the silo with these feeds. This improves fermentation and feeding value of your sunflower or soybean silage. Also make certain that you chop the silage a bit finer and pack it well. Have moisture content between 60 and 70 percent. Also, cover with plastic when you're done.

Maybe better yet, if you can mix about one ton of these silages with two or more tons of corn silage when filling the silo, really good silage should occur.

It may seem strange to use soybeans and sunflowers as hay or silage, but they can come through for you when needed.

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