

## TopFodder Silage

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Silage can be used successfully as a production feed, as a drought reserve and as an aid to pasture management and weed control. It can complement or be an alternative to hay. Silage always has the advantage of requiring less wilting/drying time than hay which can be critical when trying to manage peak pasture growth periods and conserve high quality forage.

Successful silage is the focus of the TopFodder Silage program now running throughout Australia. The program was developed by NSW Department of Primary Industries and Dairy Australia with collaborators in all states and some input from MIA. In the programs first 18 months it has involved over 800 dairy farmers and a few beef and lamb producers and silage contractors. The program is now available to anyone in NSW with an interest in improving the profitability of silage.

### What makes silage successful?

Improved feed quality is a major aim of the program. Most producers can improve the quality of their silage by at least 1MJ ME/kg DM and the ME target for all silage should be 10MJ ME/kg DM or better (9.5 MJ for tropical grass silage).

Experience tells us that most producers underestimate the losses and wastage involved in conserving fodder as hay or silage. In many cases they don't even recognise the losses that occur while pastures dry in the paddock. Significant savings can be made by reducing losses and wastage at all stages of the conservation process from mowing to feed out.

Silage can be made more profitable by improving feed quality and reducing losses. For example, if the quality of 200t DM of silage can be improved by 1MJ ME/kg DM and losses reduced by 10% a dairy farmer can make an extra \$10,000. There are simple calculators on the TopFodder website to help work this out.

The aim of the Top Fodder Silage program is not to convince producers to make silage, rather to have all producers who make silage to do it properly by maximising quality and minimising losses, thereby maximising the profitability of their silage system. The program emphasises economic decision making and several decision aid tools have been developed to help producers work out their costs and returns.

### What is TopFodder Silage?

TopFodder Silage is a comprehensive information and training program comprising:

- TopFodder Successful Silage manual available from the NSW DPI Bookstore. At 450 pages this is the most comprehensive silage reference produced in Australia and now comes with a DVD to further demonstrate good practice.
- Top Fodder Silage Workshops are run, on request, by NSW DPI. In some ways they are similar and complementary to the popular Prograze program. The TopFodder course is run over 3 or 4 days at intervals to suit farmers. Cost includes the TopFodder manual
- [www.topfodder.com.au](http://www.topfodder.com.au) The TopFodder website is progressively being developed. It has some brief silage notes highlighting important sections from the manual and includes the decision aid calculators to help producers assess the economics of both large and small investment in silage.

grown under the same conditions (Stewart & Judson 2004).

### Potential use on farms

Graza radish provides a unique combination of features for rapid establishment in summer conditions, virus tolerance, high quality forage, persistence under grazing and yields comparable with other brassica crops. This will allow it to be used in many high fertility grazing systems where high yields of high quality forage are required as well as in mixtures with clovers and herbs such as chicory and plantain. It also offers potential as a late summer sown crop providing valuable feed in late April and May before the later sown annual ryegrasses becomes productive.

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