



# DON'T LET POOR PLANNING RUIN YOUR 2018 CORN HARVEST

## Here's the Only Harvest Checklist You'll Ever Need

The corn silage harvest is arguably the most critical time of the year for a dairy's future productivity and profitability. In a period of a few weeks, nine to 14 months of feed inventory is created. Don't let poor planning and miscommunication ruin an entire year's worth of production.

### EARLY WINTER

- ✓ **EVALUATE YOUR MOST RECENT HARVEST SEASON**  
Take samples of your newly opened silage pit and discuss any breakdowns in past communication.
- ✓ **CONSULT YOUR CORN SEED SALESPERSON**  
Find out which types of corn will work best for your planting strategy and plan to stagger your planting schedule.

*Knowing how many tons of feed you'll need to feed your herd and how many acres you'll need to plant is the first conversation to have. Producers also need to understand the day-length maturity of the corn they are planting and know what moisture and maturity level they should be targeting for harvest.*

— Jon Botch, an Idaho-based Consultant Assistant

### SPRING

- ✓ **STAGGER YOUR CORN PLANTING SCHEDULE**  
This allows more flexibility around harvest season to get the best results from your silage.
- ✓ **FIND OUT WHAT YOUR NUTRITIONIST WANTS FOR YOUR HERD**  
The tonnage amount and nutritional needs will differ from dairy to dairy. Talk to your nutritionist early to understand their goals for your animals' nutrition.
- ✓ **COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR CUSTOM HARVESTER IN THE SPRING**  
Let your harvester know your estimated time for harvest and your preferred chop length to get the best results.

*Ideally, we'd make sure everyone is on the same page in the Spring. It's best if the farmer and custom harvester can work together to make sure the corn is staggered to harvest at the right time. Many dairymen don't own their own equipment and are waiting for a third party to harvest their corn so it's a race to get on the calendar.*

— Steve Mayo, an Idaho-based Consultant Assistant



## SUMMER

- ✓ **EVALUATE STORAGE PITS AND BUNKER SPACE**  
Calculate how much space you'll need to store the new silage and start clearing room to be ready for the harvest rush.
- ✓ **DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITIES TO DIFFERENT TEAM MEMBERS**  
Work with your consultant assistant and harvest team to ensure everyone knows their role in the harvest. This is a critical time in your herd's future productivity so don't neglect communication.
- ✓ **ASK FOR TRAINING FOR YOUR TEAM**  
A simple training on the Corn Silage Processing Monitoring Cup can help scale house operators evaluate the incoming loads and immediately see if there needs to be an equipment adjustment.

### Corn Silage Processing Monitoring Cup Technique

Using a 32-oz. cup, collect a sample and check the kernel processing for whole kernels.

**IDEAL SAMPLE** → Less than two half or whole kernels

**ADEQUATE SAMPLE** → Two to four half or whole kernels

**INADEQUATE SAMPLE** → More than four half or whole kernels

If more than two whole or half kernels appear in the sample, check your equipment immediately for loose bolts, worn rollers, or out-of-adjustment processors.

- ✓ **CHECK YOUR EQUIPMENT**  
If you own your own equipment, check the rollers and knives in the summer to give you plenty of time to order new parts if necessary.
- ✓ **GET ON YOUR CUSTOM HARVESTER'S CALENDAR**  
Watch your maturing corn and call your harvester to get on their schedule.

*There's a lot that goes into corn silage. Every step to making corn silage is important and it can easily go wrong and affect you for the entire upcoming year. You'll spend all year growing it and a few weeks in harvest. If you don't get it right, it can have a long-lasting impact on your bottom line.*

— Josh Sanders, an Idaho-based Consultant Assistant

## HARVEST TIME

### ✓ GATHER YOUR TEAM

Whether you are harvesting your own crop or hiring a custom harvester, make sure your nutritionist and a consultant assistant, if you are working with one, are involved in the process. An additional pair of eyes on the incoming loads can help troubleshoot and resolve issues quickly.

### ✓ CHECK EQUIPMENT EACH MORNING

Check the rollers and knives before and during the harvest. Loose bolts or worn equipment can result in an unacceptable chop length.

*When harvest starts, I am checking the process from the beginning. I ask the chopper driver to pull up two feet into the field and I check the sample and make adjustments. You can tell immediately if they need to tighten down rolls or lengthen the chop. It's a fairly lengthy process at the beginning but we're putting up a year's worth of feed in a week and we need to make sure it's the best product possible.*

— Steve Mayo

### ✓ SAMPLE YOUR SILAGE

Using a shaker box or the monitoring cup technique, make sure the chop length and kernel processing is correct.

### ✓ BE PRESENT

Have another set of eyes on the loads coming in and facilitate the communication between the equipment operators, the harvester, and whomever you've delegated to monitor the end product.

### ✓ MONITOR THE TRACTORS AND WAGONS

Know how many tractors need to be on site and make sure they are the right weight to pack the silage.

### ✓ PACK AND COVER YOUR SILAGE WITH CARE

Pay careful attention that the plastic cover is air tight and tires weigh down the tarps to allow the silage to ferment properly and reduce the risk of mold.

*You need to know how fast the wagons are coming in and how many tractors are packing the silage. Packing and covering your silage is a key step in the harvest. If it's not put up correctly, it can create issues later.*

— Stacy Schwoerer, a Wisconsin-based Consultant Assistant

### ✓ TAKE PHOTOS AND DETAILED NOTES OF SAMPLES

When the harvest is over, look back through your photos and notes to determine the best strategy for next year.

*Plan everything out so you aren't surprised by the harvest in September. Corn silage is one of the best buys for feeding your herd. If it's poor, you'll have decreased energy in your herd which will impact your bottom line.*

— Stacy Schwoerer