



## MAKING SILAGE

**AIM: TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON SILAGE AND SILAGE MAKING**

### 1. What is silage?

- ❖ Silage is saved green feed which can be fed to cattle at any time of the year, though it is very useful during the dry season.
- ❖ Silage is easy for cattle to digest.
- ❖ Silage is easy to make if a farmer follows recommended practices. (*see page 2 and separate fact sheets*)

### 2. What plants suit silage making?

- ❖ The ideal dry matter should be about 35% - (not too green and not too dry).
- ❖ Plants which suit silage making are:
  - ✓ Maize, sorghum
  - ✓ Straws (maize stover, sorghum straw, pasture hay)

### 3. Making a pit:

**The ideal place for a silo should be:**

- Elevated – ideally sloping downwards so water can run away.
- Free from water logging – so the silage does not spoil.
- Walls of the silo pit must be leak proof.
- An ideal place is close to an ant hill.
- The maximum depth of a pit should be 1 metre below ground.
- Pits can be filled above ground level, as long as they are well covered and compacted.





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STEPS FOR MAKING SILAGE	
<b>Harvest</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Harvest your fodder/forage</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Maize / Corn: 'milk' stage</li> <li>✓ Sorghum: 'milk' stage</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Chop</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Chop the fodder into short lengths (1-3 cm)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Place in a pit, drum or other container, e.g. bucket;</li> <li>✓ Chopping helps the stack to be easily compressed;</li> <li>✓ This helps lactic acid fermentation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Compact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Compact as tightly as possible</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Use a heavy object to remove air, e.g. water filled drum, tractor, stamping with gum boots, home-made compactor.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Molasses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Add molasses if the crop is dry (stover)</b> <p>Sprinkle a molasses solution over the top (if needed) - see fact sheet on "<i>Silage making from maize stover</i>"</p> </li> </ul>
<b>Cover</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Cover the stack with plastic</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Seal the pit with an airtight plastic cover;</li> <li>✓ Plastic covers should be pressed down with heavy objects like bricks, soil or tyres.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Seal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Keep sealed for at least 6 weeks (45 days).</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ This allows the silage time to ferment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Feed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Feed silage</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Open the pit when you are ready to feed.</li> <li>✓ Once the silo-pit is opened, cover it immediately after removing a silage ration to help prevent spoilage.</li> <li>✓ Continue feeding until the silage is finished. This helps to avoid fungal contamination.</li> <li>✓ Do not feed silage during milking to avoid a scent in the milk being produced.</li> <li>✓ Feed silage in a trough to avoid wastage. Any leftover silage can be fed to non-milking animals.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

ZDTP is focused on supporting dairy farmers to improve their productivity, milk quality and linkages to urban markets. The views expressed in this publication are those of the implementers of the programme and do not necessarily reflect those of the New Zealand Government. For further information, please contact ZDTP on [zdtpinfo@primeconsultants.net](mailto:zdtpinfo@primeconsultants.net). Follow us on [www.zambiadairy.com](http://www.zambiadairy.com), Facebook ([facebook.com/zambiadairy](https://facebook.com/zambiadairy)) and Twitter (@DairyZambia).