The 2020 Harvest Season in Quebec: rations to be rich in corn silage?

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The 2020 harvest season has been quite challenging. Drought affected several regions in Canada from spring to mid-summer. The yields from the first and second cut were generally very disappointing. The last few weeks have seemed more positive; yields were better for the third cut, the same goes for replacement forages such as Sudan grass and finally, the corn silage harvest bodes well.

The Opportunity to Buy Corn Silage at a Good Price

This is a good time to take stock of the situation: will the stocks harvested up to now and those yet to be harvested be enough to provide sufficient forage supplies until June 2021? This article can help you to know for sure. If the answer is no, there is still time to consider adding corn silage.

The availability of temporary silos or tube silos (commonly called Ag-Bags) and heap silos are an option for many herds that may not normally use them. The forage to fill them may come from a neighbor who had a good harvest this fall and may have a surplus of corn silage. He may be more interested in selling it to you than threshing his extra hectares given the current low prices for corn grain. It is also an opportunity for a neighboring crop producer: he could sell you his standing field, and you could harvest the whole plant. His objective being to get a profit ($/ha) at least as high as if he had harvested his grain as usual.

Taking into account current hay prices and market corn grain prices, this is a good opportunity to make a win-win deal. All you have to do is approach your neighbors and try to come to an agreement. Your Lactanet

advisors can help you to establish price levels that should be offered (or asked for).

More Corn Silage in the Rations

Even if the quantities of forage available on your farm are sufficient to get through the winter, it may be that the amount of each type in the ration fed to your cows will be different from previous years. Given the low yields from perennial forages this year, many producers will probably use rations with higher proportions of corn silage. What considerations need to be made?

First, the higher the proportion of an ingredient in the ration, the more impact the quality will have on herd performance. It will be even more important to harvest high quality corn silage! This article can help clarify the most frequently asked questions on the subject.

Furthermore, some precautions must be taken when using high proportions of corn silage in a ration. This type of ration has a higher risk of having a negative impact on rumen health. It is not uncommon to see a drop in milk fat levels or an abnormal incidence of acidosis in the herd. To minimize these risks, consult this excellent article from le Bulletin des agriculteurs (available in french only) that shares six ways to increase corn silage in the ration. Another important aspect that will need to be closely monitored is your cows' rumen health. PROFILab is the ideal tool to do this to avoid unpleasant surprises and correct problems before they get out of hand.

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By Jean-Philippe Laroche, agr., M. Sc.

Jean-Philippe who grew up on a dairy farm is particularly interested in forage valorization by ruminants. Member of l'Ordre des agronomes, he graduated in agronomy from Laval University in 2018 and also completed a Master's degree in animal sciences, during which he received several distinctions.

By Karen Bergeron agr., M. Sc.

By

By