

## Harvesting silage

### Overview

An important part of corn silage production is proper and timely harvest management. Follow these guidelines to help maximize efficiency and profits from using high-quality corn silages on your dairy.

### Action steps

- Plan for harvest:** Time your harvest based on the moisture percentage that ensures the desired fermentation pattern in your type of storage (see *Table 1*). This helps maximize performance based on specific silage hybrids, and will produce better results than following the general rule of thumb about harvesting when kernels are at one-third to one-half milkline.
- Calculate moisture levels:** This can be done using a Koster tester, which uses forced air, or with a microwave oven. Both methods allow for easy, accurate readings.
- Determine chop length:** Silage harvesting equipment should be set to attain the desired chop length, or theoretical length of cut (TLC). See *Table 2* for length recommendations. Particle size at harvest will be affected by knife sharpness, harvest speed, shear bar setting and crop moisture. Drier materials need to be cut shorter to ease packing.
- Adjust kernel processing:** Ensure your processing doesn't just crack the kernel, but annihilates it. This improves the overall starch utilization of your silage.
- Pack silage:** Proper packing provides the anaerobic environment necessary for effective fermentation to occur. More densely-packed forage will have reduced dry matter loss and higher feeding quality. Wait 45-60 days before feeding for optimal fermentation.

**Table 1: Recommended whole plant moisture content for harvesting**

Silo type	Recommended moisture
Top-unloading Upright	<b>TMF:</b> 62-65% <b>BMR:</b> 63-67%
Bunker or Pile	<b>TMF:</b> 65-68% <b>BMR:</b> 66-70%
Bag	<b>TMF:</b> 62-68% <b>BMR:</b> 66-68%

**Table 2: Theoretical length of cut recommendations**

Silage type	TLC
Unprocessed TMF	3/8" - 3/4"
Unprocessed BMR	3/4" - 1"
Processed TMF	3/4" - 1"
Processed BMR	1" - 1 1/2"



### 30-Second Summary

- Harvest is key to maximizing corn silage performance and profitability.
- Time harvest based on moisture percentage for your fermentation pattern, and calculate moisture levels with testing.
- Harvest with the ideal chop length for your silage type.
- Process kernels and properly pack silage to maximize digestibility.

### NOTES:

For more information, contact:



[www.nutechseed.com](http://www.nutechseed.com)  
1-888-647-3478