

**Seasonal Update:**

Hay and silage cuts are well and truly underway on most farms now. Warmer days are speeding up leaf emergence rates along with the sprinkles of rain. Light showers are still forecast for the regions over the next week or so. State wide we are down on rainfall compared to this time last year, but on average figures to this time of year for Bunbury and Margaret River are only just below the usual average, while Serpentine and Albany regions are between 100-200ml below average so far.

Leaf Emergence Rates (LER) (Based on current max and min air temperatures)			
Serpentine	Bunbury	Margaret River	Albany
14	12	13	12.5

**Silage and dry matter content:**

The dry matter (DM) percentage of silage is important to consider before baling or collecting for a pit, and it is an important step for fermentation. In pit silage you should aim for 30-35% DM, while baled silage should be a little drier at 40-50%. There is a quick and easy “hand squeeze” test you can use in the paddock to check the DM of your silage.

Here’s how to do it:

1. Collect multiple representative samples of the forage
2. Mix the samples together and take a sub sample
3. Cut the forage into 1-2 cm lengths
4. Tightly squeeze a handful into a ball for about 30 seconds
5. Quickly open hand
6. Estimate the DM using the table to the right:

DM content	Condition of the sample
Below 25%	Free moisture runs through fingers as material is being squeezed. When pressure is released the ball of chopped forage holds its shape. A lot of free moisture is present on hand.
25% - 30%	Ball just holds its shape. No free moisture expressed. Hand moist.
30% - 40%	Ball falls apart slowly. No free moisture. Little or no moisture on hand.
Over 40%	Ball springs apart quickly.

It is also possible to microwave samples to get a more accurate DM percentage. To do so, follows steps 1&2 from above, then;

1. Place a microwave safe dish on a set of scales, and zero/tare the scales. (Note: scales need to be able to weigh in grams). Take care not to move/adjust scales between weighing once its been zeroed.
2. Place the sample in the dish and record the weight (this is the wet weight).
3. Place the dish in the microwave, with a glass of cool water, and heat on high for 3-4 mins, or until dry.
4. When sample is dry, weigh the sample to get the dry weight. You should weigh sample, then microwave for an additional 30 seconds and reweigh, if the weight hasn't changed the sample is dry, if the weight has changed microwave again for 30 seconds and re-weigh. When weight is constant, sample is dry. Ensure water is still cool.
5. Divide the dry weight by the wet weight and multiply by 100, to determine the DM %.

So for example,

Place dish on scales and zero/tare scales. Add 150gm of wet sample, scales read 150gm.

After microwaving the sample and ensuring its properly dry, the scales read 52gm.

$$52 \text{ (dry sample)} / 150 \text{ (wet sample)} = 0.35$$

$$0.35 * 100 = 35\% \quad \text{Therefore the sample is 35\% DM.}$$

**Note:** How big your sample is will determine how long you need to microwave it for. Generally, 3-4 mins is long enough. Take care as samples can catch alight in the microwave. If sample begins to smoke immediately stop microwave.

**Upcoming Events**

Western Dairy Annual Spring Field Day and AGM – Tuesday the 28<sup>th</sup> of November, details and program to be released.



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