

2010 NNY Forage Quality Cup Winners Share Production, Storage & Feeding Tips

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Last winter Cornell Cooperative Extension in collaboration with Dairy One and with sponsorship from Dairy One, Miller Spraying; Blue Seal Richer Dairy Nutrition; Farm Credit East, ACA, Burrville and Potsdam; Feed Commodities International, Inc.; Cargill Animal Nutrition; and Renaissance Nutrition, Inc. held the 2010 NNY Forage Quality Cup.

Winners: A Friendly Competition with Important Results

Samples were judged on overall forage quality. The recognized methods of Relative Forage Quality (RFQ) was used for Haylage and Milk per Ton (lbs of milk per ton of forage) for Corn Silage. These were used as each value is a calculation that takes into account several other forage quality parameters.

This contest was intended to be a friendly competition that could be used to promote the importance of forage quality and to help farms assess where their forages ranked compared to other farms across the NNY region. It is important to look at this with a critical eye; though RFQ and Milk/Ton are recognized ways to measure forage quality they do not necessarily encompass all the factors that may be important to the management of forages on a farm. It is important to look at how these forages fit into an overall feed ration.

Corn Silage			
County	Farm Name	Name	Milk/Ton
Lewis	Silvery Falls Farm	Dale & Steve Farnley	3743
Jefferson	Forrester Farm	Dennis Forrester	3730
St Lawrence	Lavack Farm	Jay & Karen Rizza	3514
Clinton	Hidden View Farm	Dan, Don & Dale Tetreault	3501
Franklin	Vincent Farms	David & Silas Vincent	3434

Haylage			
County	Farm Name	Name	RFQ
Jefferson	Finney Family Farm	Jim & Dan Finney	202
Clinton	Hidden View Farm	Dan, Don & Dale Tetreault	191
Lewis	Campany Homestead	Gary & Carla Campany	183
St Lawrence	Lavack Farm	Jay & Karen Rizza	182
Franklin	Vincent Farms	David & Silas Vincent	162

Forage quality can have different meanings to different farms but in a general sense it should be about providing the optimum forages to meet your herd's nutritional needs. Notice the word optimum; optimum is a much better goal than maximum. Often those who strive for the maximum (crop yields, milk production, and forage quality) often miss out on one thing, maximum profit. The cost of chasing that last ton of corn or lb of milk is often higher than the return. This is also true of forage quality, some forages are of such a high quality that they are virtually useless in formulating a well balanced ration for your herd.

Below we hear from the winners on some key points these farms attribute to their success in growing and storing high quality forages. While forage needs on farms can vary for a number of reasons; including things such as length of growing season, soil types on your farm, available equipment, available storage facilities, and herd requirements; there are some principals such as stage of crop at harvest, proper storage and kernel processing of corn that are pretty universal.

What is your definition of Forage Quality?

- Campany Homestead: Protein
- Forrester Farms: Milk!!! Digestibility + yield and high ear to stalk ratio
- Finney Family Farm: 20% protein; young and leafy, no grass
- Hidden View Farm: High milk per ton.
- Vincent Farms: Looks for good NDFd
- LaVack Farms: Quality forage is highly digestible, palatable feed that makes milk. I want the cows to want to eat it, and be able to get as much out of it as they can so I can reduce purchased grain inputs. The higher quality the forage, the more profitable the farm is going to be.

Growing the Crop

Naturally the road to forage quality starts with what you choose to plant and how you manage it in the field.

Silvery Falls Farm

- Tend towards conventional corn, planted on 15" rows
- 3 or 4 different hybrids
- 70-86 day corn - don't overdo it with season length

Campany Homestead

- N fertilizer on grass

Forrester Farms

- 97 day; triple stacked; dual purpose

Finney Family Farm

- Rotate between alfalfa and corn (3 to 4 year rotation).
- Crops and soils are very healthy. Healthy crops makes for healthy cows.

Hidden View Farm

- Corn - look for varieties that offer good grain production but that are still corn silage types
- Haylage - Alfalfa, tall fescue mix. Stands last 4-5 years and they make 4 cuttings

Vincent Farms

- Corn - based on high digestibility and long day (90-95 day) varieties
- Haylage - Alfalfa grass mix, reed canary, fescue, clover, orchard. They take 3-4 cuttings, depending on season.

LaVack Farms

- Corn - 89-101 day RM
- Based on digestibility and milk/ton.
- Grass, Alfalfa-Grass, Clover. The winning sample was 2nd cutting clover. Mostly heavier soils. Cutting schedule depends on soil type and field accessibility.

Harvesting the Crop: Timing and Strategies

Silvery Falls Farm

- Whole plant DM to determine timing
- Corn is processed
- Try to complete harvest in 4-5 days
- During harvest - run DM's while loads are coming into the bunk

Campany Homestead

- Harvest based on stage of maturity
- Hay in a day – allows us to fit harvest between weather patterns & put up baleage at 65-70% moisture which works well with TMR

Forrester Farms

- Target DM is 33%. Whole plant moisture determines timing of harvest
- Corn is processed.

Finney Family Farm

- Starts early and cuts every 4 weeks.

Hidden View Farm

- Haylage: By height, 24 inch in the alfalfa/grass mixtures
- Corn: % DM and also milk line

Vincent Farms

- Haylage - Pre-heading and early blossom of alfalfa
- Corn silage – Calendar and milk line

LaVack Farms

- Haylage - Calendar, Ideally start 20-25 May, then every 30-40 days after that.
- Corn - Based on kernel consistency. Like to be into dough stage, not hard endosperm, because I don't have a kernel processor and I want it to be digestible. But don't want it over 70% moisture.

Storing the Crop

Silvery Falls Farm

- Packing tractor never stops on bunk,
- Effort to keep layers thin
- Goal to get more packing weight
- Inoculants used

Campany Homestead

- Round bale bagger, 52" in 48" bale tube

Finney Family Farm

- Haylage is stored in Harvestore. DM of haylage needs to be 45% and cut short to accommodate silo unloading.
- Heavy use of inoculants because of dry haylage and
- Feed 1# of straw because of short cut length.

Hidden View Farm

- Concrete bunks
- Inoculants were used on both haylage and corn silage.
- Tractor used: haylage- 1486, CornSilage- MX250 with a blade
- Continue packing 1hr after the last load comes in and they do pack in thin layers
- Bunk Coverage: Haylage- same day or next if they finish late, CS – becomes a 5 day event
- tires on top
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Vincent Farms

- Concrete bunk
- Inoculants were used on both
- *They pack until you can drive on it with a car.*
- They do make an effort to pack in thin layers (wedge)
- Covered immediately after filling
- Tires are used
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LaVack Farms

- Upright silos – work well for herd size

Feeding Strategies

Silvery Falls Farm

- TMR – Mix twice per day
- Use a defacer, Take 6-8” off face/day

Campany Homestead - TMR

- 55% forage in ration, opportunity to increase if forage inventory allow

Finney Family Farm

- Planning on increasing haylage in diet and currently has 60:40 forage to grain ratio

Hidden View Farm

- Have a good feeder that uses a loader to keep the face well managed

Vincent Farms

- Use a defacer.
- Feed 60% forage ration and would like to be at 65%

LaVack Farms

- All lactating cows get the same forage. Heifers and dry cows usually get lower quality.
- Shooting for 70% forage in ration, fine tune to economic optimum