

MONTANA Farmer-Stockman

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Shift is to SILAGE

GRASS silage production in the United States increased from 1.5 million tons in 1944 to more than 9 million tons in 1952. Production is still increasing rapidly.

And the big shift is to grass silage in Montana, too. It's just as one prominent state cattleman has said: "Grass silage will be as prominent in the diet of cattle in the next few years as hay has been for the last 100 years." And this Montana cattleman puts up more than 2,500 tons of grass silage each year. (See story page 8.)

This rapid acceleration in grass silage making is a result of (1) increases in acreage and total yield of soil-conserving grassland crops, (2) need for preserving more and better feed for livestock and (3) the development of easier, faster, cheaper labor-saving methods of harvesting, storing and feeding grass silage.

Latest development in harvesting is the direct-cut field chopper which eliminates mowing and raking and reduces harvesting to a once-over operation. Storage facilities still range from conventional, tower-type silos to trench and bunker silos. Trend in Montana is to trench or bunker silos because they are cheap to build, easy to fill and best adapted to the greatest labor-saving feature of all—self-feeding.

Though storage of grass as silage is an ancient practice followed for thousands of years by peoples in countries bordering on the Mediterranean sea it is still not an exact science. Recommendations still vary regarding proper moisture content, need for preservatives and other questions. This article and others in this issue present a summary of latest authoritative recommendations available from research agencies and from current experiences of operators in Montana.

How Silage Is Formed

The transformation of a green crop into silage takes place in a silo, trench or stack. For a short time after the crop has been ensiled, plant respiration continues, and plant enzymes, yeasts, molds and

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This side-hill trench silo on the Robinson Bros. place, Cascade County, was tilled last summer with silage made from millet. It proved to be excellent feed.



This side-hill silo on the John Horst place, Dawson County, was filled with corn silage. The silo is an ideal type of concrete construction.