

FAQ's: Trefgarn owen December 2010

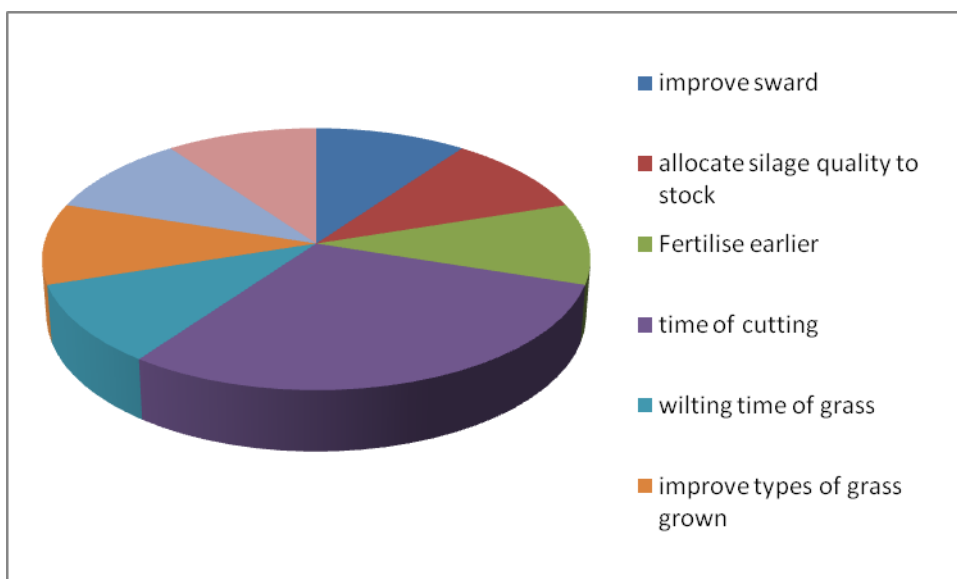
Q1. Why is colour a good indicator of quality of silage?

Well fermented silage where lactic acid is the main product of fermentation tends to be a bright yellow or light green colour. Where fermentation has given butyric acid, the silage tends to be an olive green colour and a bit 'slimey', it will also smell unpleasant. Brown or darker brown silage tends to be sweet or tobacco smelling and is often very dry, although very palatable it will have lost much of its nutritional value by overheating during fermentation.

Q2. What will members of the Trefgarn Owen group focus on to produce better silage next year?

Members were asked to suggest the 2 things they will change in order to make better silage next year. Most planned to pay more attention to cutting date to ensure the crop was less mature.

Pie chart of the methods the Trefgarn Owen Group plan to use to improve silage quality



Q3. How can I improve the quality of my silage from existing leys?

Here are three ways to tackle this:

- aim to try and improve the existing ley by increasing the ryegrass content. This can be achieved by getting soil fertility good enough to allow ryegrass to outcompete secondary less productive, and lower quality, species. Make sure the pH of the field is 6 and that the crop receives the nutrients it requires from fertiliser and fym/slurry, (base the decision on soil sample results and estimated soil nitrogen supply).
- Apply inputs early enough to reduce the risk of contaminating the silage crop.
- Control weeds as these will reduce silage quality.
- Cut silage at the optimum time; as grass matures and the ratio of stem to leaf increases the digestibility (D-value) and sugar content (WSC) drops rapidly so it is important to cut at the right time: close for silage for no more than 6-7 weeks to make good quality silages. As a guide leafy growth only (no stems) will be around 72 D, as grass stems start to lengthen silage will be around 68 D and once flower heads have emerged the “D” value will be maximum of 65 D. Remember D value starts to drop by 0.5 units /day once grass starts to bulk up. Cut grasses after midday when the sugars are at their highest leaving a stubble of 2.5-3 inches