

0:00:01.840,0:00:05.169
[Applause]

0:00:08.639,0:00:13.120
Hello and welcome to Ear to the Ground,

0:00:11.040,0:00:14.880
the agricultural podcast brought to you

0:00:13.120,0:00:16.880
by Farming Connect.

0:00:14.880,0:00:17.920
I'm your host Aled Jones and thank you

0:00:16.880,0:00:19.920
for tuning in.

0:00:17.920,0:00:22.160
We aim to bring you a new episode of

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0:00:30.160,0:00:35.440
with all the latest episodes. Today, we're

0:00:33.680,0:00:37.120
going to be talking about how farmers

0:00:35.440,0:00:39.920
can improve their bottom line

0:00:37.120,0:00:40.960
by improving the quality of their grass

0:00:39.920,0:00:43.040
silage.

0:00:40.960,0:00:45.440
Over the past five years, Farming Connect

0:00:43.040,0:00:46.000
has helped Welsh farmers to analyse over

0:00:45.440,0:00:49.360

0:00:46.000,0:00:52.000
2,000 silage samples and I met the person

0:00:49.360,0:00:52.879
who's been examining the data to see how

0:00:52.000,0:00:58.960
much difference

0:00:52.879,0:01:02.399
good silage can make to a business.

0:00:58.960,0:01:04.479
Hi everybody, I'm Dave Davies. I

0:01:02.399,0:01:06.720
am a farmer's son originally from the

0:01:04.479,0:01:10.560
Welsh borders Powys, Shropshire borders

0:01:06.720,0:01:12.720
and I did a PhD

0:01:10.560,0:01:14.240
in rumen microbiology, actually looking

0:01:12.720,0:01:16.000
at how well the rumen functions under

0:01:14.240,0:01:19.360
different feeding regimes

0:01:16.000,0:01:22.240
and spent 20 years

0:01:19.360,0:01:22.880
as a scientist at IGER in Aberystwyth.

0:01:22.240,0:01:26.400
Then

0:01:22.880,0:01:27.920
in 2010 I left IGER and

0:01:26.400,0:01:30.240
established my own company Silage

0:01:27.920,0:01:32.000
Solutions Limited and

0:01:30.240,0:01:34.079
in the last 10 years I think I've

0:01:32.000,0:01:36.640
probably learned

0:01:34.079,0:01:38.479
a lot about the practical aspects of

0:01:36.640,0:01:40.079
silage more than I could when I was a

0:01:38.479,0:01:43.759
research scientist.

0:01:40.079,0:01:46.399
I've travelled widely across Europe

0:01:43.759,0:01:47.439
talking about silage, but I still do

0:01:46.399,0:01:49.040
research. I

0:01:47.439,0:01:50.960
have a number of research projects that

0:01:49.040,0:01:52.720
I continue to do and I think

0:01:50.960,0:01:54.479
I'm a very lucky person being able to

0:01:52.720,0:01:57.759
mix research and practical

0:01:54.479,0:01:59.759
agriculture, so I am very lucky.

0:01:57.759,0:02:01.360
And that's the key isn't it, matching

0:01:59.759,0:02:03.680
that academic

0:02:01.360,0:02:04.399
research ability with practical

0:02:03.680,0:02:06.079
Application,

0:02:04.399,0:02:07.439
which is so important.

0:02:06.079,0:02:08.800
Interestingly, you mentioned there that

0:02:07.439,0:02:10.959
your work takes you

0:02:08.800,0:02:11.920
all over Europe, but tell us a bit more

0:02:10.959,0:02:15.360
about the work you've done

0:02:11.920,0:02:17.120
in other countries. Generally I

0:02:15.360,0:02:18.400
do a lot of work directly with the

0:02:17.120,0:02:21.440
farming community

0:02:18.400,0:02:23.760
and learning about their

0:02:21.440,0:02:25.440
differences in their management styles

0:02:23.760,0:02:27.680
and their production

0:02:25.440,0:02:30.319
strategies. I've travelled right

0:02:27.680,0:02:34.080
across Europe, all the way into Russia,

0:02:30.319,0:02:36.720
even over into the Asian part of Russia

0:02:34.080,0:02:38.080
and Turkey and it's amazing what

0:02:36.720,0:02:41.200
similarities there.

0:02:38.080,0:02:43.840
I would say most farmers in

0:02:41.200,0:02:44.480
the world have the same issues as UK

0:02:43.840,0:02:47.280
farmers,

0:02:44.480,0:02:48.319
Welsh farmers, so the weather would be

0:02:47.280,0:02:51.040
a key one and

0:02:48.319,0:02:51.920
and what they do with their product is

0:02:51.040,0:02:54.000
the other key one.

0:02:51.920,0:02:56.000

They are all working within

0:02:54.000,0:02:59.040

different political systems

0:02:56.000,0:03:02.879

and the range in silage making

0:02:59.040,0:03:04.159

technologies is also very similar.

0:03:02.879,0:03:06.400

You see very good

0:03:04.159,0:03:07.599

producers in each of those countries and

0:03:06.400,0:03:09.280

some

0:03:07.599,0:03:12.480

less good should we say, and that's

0:03:09.280,0:03:14.000

being polite.

0:03:12.480,0:03:16.080

There's a range in all

0:03:14.000,0:03:18.239

countries but how would you say

0:03:16.080,0:03:19.760

Welsh farms compare to some of the

0:03:18.239,0:03:22.480

countries you've been to in terms of our

0:03:19.760,0:03:26.080

ability to produce high quality silage?

0:03:22.480,0:03:28.640

I think we are

0:03:26.080,0:03:30.159

very similar like I said, I think our

0:03:28.640,0:03:32.319

best farmers would compete

0:03:30.159,0:03:33.599

with their best farmers. I'd say our

0:03:32.319,0:03:37.360

average farmers in

0:03:33.599,0:03:39.920

in Wales are average in Europe.

0:03:37.360,0:03:40.959
People that come to me and say if

0:03:39.920,0:03:42.959
you wanted to go

0:03:40.959,0:03:44.400
on a farm tour to look at silage

0:03:42.959,0:03:45.200
making practices, which country would you

0:03:44.400,0:03:47.920
go to?

0:03:45.200,0:03:50.319
I'd always say the Czech Republic. Their

0:03:47.920,0:03:52.319
average farm is significantly better

0:03:50.319,0:03:55.680
than most other European Countries

0:03:52.319,0:03:57.360
and those in Wales.

0:03:55.680,0:03:58.959
And people say the other extreme, what's the

0:03:57.360,0:03:59.599
worst place you go and I'd say that

0:03:58.959,0:04:03.040
would be

0:03:59.599,0:04:04.640
Latvia and Lithuania, where if you can do a

0:04:03.040,0:04:06.480
incorrect practice they seem to manage

0:04:04.640,0:04:08.400
it on most farms.

0:04:06.480,0:04:09.760
I think the particular challenge we have

0:04:08.400,0:04:11.840
here in Wales is

0:04:09.760,0:04:14.640
the low dry matter grass because in many

0:04:11.840,0:04:16.959
of those countries their focus is on

0:04:14.640,0:04:18.400
lucerne and May silage because they

0:04:16.959,0:04:20.079
have the weather conditions for it.

0:04:18.400,0:04:22.880
I think when I look at grass silage

0:04:20.079,0:04:25.759
quality we do a very good job in

0:04:22.880,0:04:27.120
Wales on making grass silage. But I

0:04:25.759,0:04:28.000
still think we could learn from some of

0:04:27.120,0:04:31.520
those other countries

0:04:28.000,0:04:35.199
and again here I would say Sweden

0:04:31.520,0:04:38.000
and Denmark are two places that we could

0:04:35.199,0:04:39.360
possibly learn some things from. What

0:04:38.000,0:04:42.000
are the key things do you think we

0:04:39.360,0:04:45.680
could take home from those countries?

0:04:42.000,0:04:48.960
I think one thing that we don't value

0:04:45.680,0:04:50.720
enough is the value of silage.

0:04:48.960,0:04:52.800
Most producers in Wales will be using

0:04:50.720,0:04:55.919
grass silage as their main crop

0:04:52.800,0:04:57.120
and that is something that's always

0:04:55.919,0:04:59.120
there, it's in the field

0:04:57.120,0:05:01.600
and we harvest it. We don't actually

0:04:59.120,0:05:03.600

think, or many farmers don't think enough,

0:05:01.600,0:05:05.280
about the nutritive quality,

0:05:03.600,0:05:06.800
what they want it to do and what they're

0:05:05.280,0:05:08.240
feeding it to.

0:05:06.800,0:05:10.080
Why some of these other countries

0:05:08.240,0:05:10.720
are better is that many of those are

0:05:10.080,0:05:13.360
using

0:05:10.720,0:05:14.320
silage as 100% of their forage throughout

0:05:13.360,0:05:17.680
the year because

0:05:14.320,0:05:19.199
there's a large number of farms where

0:05:17.680,0:05:19.600
animals are housed all year round.

0:05:19.199,0:05:21.840
They

0:05:19.600,0:05:22.880
really do focus on their forage quality.

0:05:21.840,0:05:25.680
I think

0:05:22.880,0:05:28.160
in Wales we're starting to do that to a

0:05:25.680,0:05:29.680
greater extent with our grazed grass,

0:05:28.160,0:05:30.880
but, you know, there's no reason why we

0:05:29.680,0:05:31.199
shouldn't be doing it with silage as

0:05:30.880,0:05:32.639
well.

0:05:31.199,0:05:34.320
When we look at the top farmers in

0:05:32.639,0:05:36.880
Wales they are doing it with silage,

0:05:34.320,0:05:38.400
and they reap the benefit. And it's

0:05:36.880,0:05:40.800
really interesting to read,

0:05:38.400,0:05:42.000
you've recently produced a report for

0:05:40.800,0:05:44.720
Farming Connect,

0:05:42.000,0:05:46.639
the Silage Quality Report which

0:05:44.720,0:05:47.600
you've been analysing data from over

0:05:46.639,0:05:50.000
2,000

0:05:47.600,0:05:51.840
silage samples taken from farms all

0:05:50.000,0:05:53.280
across Wales.

0:05:51.840,0:05:55.759
Some of the

0:05:53.280,0:05:58.080
best performing farms producing the

0:05:55.759,0:06:01.120
highest quality silage are seeing some

0:05:58.080,0:06:01.680
incredible gains over and above the

0:06:01.120,0:06:03.680
average

0:06:01.680,0:06:05.759
silage quality farms which we'll

0:06:03.680,0:06:07.520
come on to in just a moment. But

0:06:05.759,0:06:09.280
tell us Dave a little bit about how

0:06:07.520,0:06:10.160
that information was collected in the

0:06:09.280,0:06:12.800
first place

0:06:10.160,0:06:14.800
and how you've completed the task of

0:06:12.800,0:06:17.440
analysing all that data?

0:06:14.800,0:06:18.800
As part of Farming Connect, many

0:06:17.440,0:06:21.120
farmers supply

0:06:18.800,0:06:23.199
a sample, either taken by a Farming

0:06:21.120,0:06:25.520
Connect officer or themselves,

0:06:23.199,0:06:27.759
where they can get their analysis done

0:06:25.520,0:06:30.720
for free

0:06:27.759,0:06:31.120
through a standard UK laboratory where

0:06:30.720,0:06:33.280
it's

0:06:31.120,0:06:35.199
analysed by a rapid technique called

0:06:33.280,0:06:38.080
near infrared spectroscopy.

0:06:35.199,0:06:39.039
That predicts your silage quality. So

0:06:38.080,0:06:41.520
what I've done

0:06:39.039,0:06:42.240
is actually, in partnership with Farming

0:06:41.520,0:06:45.199
Connect,

0:06:42.240,0:06:46.720
had access to the entire database since

0:06:45.199,0:06:48.639
2015.

0:06:46.720,0:06:50.639

Those silages that I've been

0:06:48.639,0:06:52.800
analysing are

0:06:50.639,0:06:54.560
from the 2015 season right through

0:06:52.800,0:06:57.360
to the 2020 season.

0:06:54.560,0:06:59.360
There are fewer samples in the 2015

0:06:57.360,0:07:00.400
season and the 2020 season because we

0:06:59.360,0:07:03.680
caught it

0:07:00.400,0:07:05.039
not right at

0:07:03.680,0:07:06.639
the start of that year and not right at

0:07:05.039,0:07:08.880
the end of 2020,

0:07:06.639,0:07:10.560
and obviously with 2020 there were other

0:07:08.880,0:07:13.440
challenges on silage sampling

0:07:10.560,0:07:15.280
on-farm in Wales. But, basically, there's a

0:07:13.440,0:07:15.680
standard procedure, standard analysis,

0:07:15.280,0:07:18.160
that

0:07:15.680,0:07:19.039
all farms to be honest, most farms in the

0:07:18.160,0:07:20.960
world will have,

0:07:19.039,0:07:23.039
that type of silage analysis. And I've

0:07:20.960,0:07:25.120
taken those silage analyses

0:07:23.039,0:07:26.319
and just pulled apart the data that's

0:07:25.120,0:07:29.440

there in terms of

0:07:26.319,0:07:30.720

the digestibility, the metabolisable

0:07:29.440,0:07:32.639

energy, the protein

0:07:30.720,0:07:34.400

and some of the other factors looking at

0:07:32.639,0:07:36.960

what things have changed.

0:07:34.400,0:07:37.919

I've broken it down on a year basis

0:07:36.960,0:07:41.039

so looking at

0:07:37.919,0:07:43.919

2015, silages 2016

0:07:41.039,0:07:44.639

and so on. I think the key finding is

0:07:43.919,0:07:48.319

that

0:07:44.639,0:07:51.680

the actual top 25% and

0:07:48.319,0:07:53.199

average silage quality have not

0:07:51.680,0:07:55.360

changed over that time

0:07:53.199,0:07:56.879

which is a little disappointing to be

0:07:55.360,0:07:59.039

honest.

0:07:56.879,0:08:00.080

Have you identified any particular year

0:07:59.039,0:08:02.879

that was better

0:08:00.080,0:08:03.280

for silage quality than another? We often

0:08:02.879,0:08:04.960

hear

0:08:03.280,0:08:06.560
in the wine industry about the vintage

0:08:04.960,0:08:09.199
year for wine. Has there been a vintage

0:08:06.560,0:08:11.680
year for silage in that five-year window?

0:08:09.199,0:08:13.039
No, there hasn't and I think this

0:08:11.680,0:08:16.560
comes down to

0:08:13.039,0:08:18.479
the fact that farmers tend to learn from

0:08:16.560,0:08:20.160
their fathers on silage making.

0:08:18.479,0:08:21.520
They tend to do the same thing year in

0:08:20.160,0:08:23.360
year out so the same

0:08:21.520,0:08:25.039
mistakes are made or the same positives

0:08:23.360,0:08:26.560
are made.

0:08:25.039,0:08:28.400
You know, a nice analogy to the wine

0:08:26.560,0:08:29.440
industry, silage is produced as a

0:08:28.400,0:08:31.520
fermentation,

0:08:29.440,0:08:33.519
as a result of a fermentation so is wine

0:08:31.520,0:08:36.159
but

0:08:33.519,0:08:37.839
many wine producers, I'd say all wine

0:08:36.159,0:08:39.440
producers, have a good taste of their

0:08:37.839,0:08:41.519
wine whereas,

0:08:39.440,0:08:42.959

and I wouldn't recommend that

0:08:41.519,0:08:44.399
producers should be tasting their

0:08:42.959,0:08:46.160
silage, but they should

0:08:44.399,0:08:49.040
be analysing the performance from that

0:08:46.160,0:08:50.640
silage much more closely.

0:08:49.040,0:08:52.560
We often hear about the importance of

0:08:50.640,0:08:54.800
analysing your silage,

0:08:52.560,0:08:56.480
how many farmers would you say do this

0:08:54.800,0:08:59.760
routinely?

0:08:56.480,0:09:02.720
I think in the dairy sector

0:08:59.760,0:09:04.399
I'd say all farmers do it routinely.

0:09:02.720,0:09:05.920
The only criticism I'd have at the dairy

0:09:04.399,0:09:07.440
sector is they probably don't do it

0:09:05.920,0:09:09.120
often enough through that silage

0:09:07.440,0:09:11.519
feeding period.

0:09:09.120,0:09:12.880
Where as in the sheep and beef sectors,

0:09:11.519,0:09:15.600
it's a lot lower.

0:09:12.880,0:09:17.440
It's probably higher in the beef sector

0:09:15.600,0:09:21.760
maybe 50-60%.

0:09:17.440,0:09:26.560
In the sheep sector, it's probably 10-15%.

0:09:21.760,0:09:29.200
Now analysis is one thing but I think

0:09:26.560,0:09:30.480
the focus for analysis I would say

0:09:29.200,0:09:32.240
should be twofold.

0:09:30.480,0:09:34.640
Those farmers that are analysing at the

0:09:32.240,0:09:37.600
moment, it's probably

0:09:34.640,0:09:38.880
for nutritional purposes, on looking at

0:09:37.600,0:09:40.720
that silage and what they need to

0:09:38.880,0:09:42.959
ration against it.

0:09:40.720,0:09:44.399
But the second process, which is probably

0:09:42.959,0:09:47.760
more important,

0:09:44.399,0:09:49.680
is actually looking at how you

0:09:47.760,0:09:51.600
have done in relation to what you needed

0:09:49.680,0:09:53.360
to do and how you change things for next

0:09:51.600,0:09:54.959
year to do better.

0:09:53.360,0:09:57.120
What are the key things you need to look

0:09:54.959,0:09:58.959
out for in that analysis?

0:09:57.120,0:10:01.600
Do you think that enough farmers fully

0:09:58.959,0:10:04.399
understand the data they're getting

0:10:01.600,0:10:06.000
when they receive that analysis back? I

0:10:04.399,0:10:07.440
think that most farmers do not

0:10:06.000,0:10:10.000
understand the detail.

0:10:07.440,0:10:12.720
I think the way the analysis sheet is

0:10:10.000,0:10:14.480
sent to farmers is sometimes confusing.

0:10:12.720,0:10:17.200
I also think there are things on that

0:10:14.480,0:10:20.640
analysis sheet that are superfluous to

0:10:17.200,0:10:22.560
most farmers needs and so they lose

0:10:20.640,0:10:23.760
focus on what are the most important

0:10:22.560,0:10:27.360
factors.

0:10:23.760,0:10:29.200
So as a short,

0:10:27.360,0:10:31.760
very brief thing I would say there are

0:10:29.200,0:10:35.200
three things of critical importance,

0:10:31.760,0:10:37.519
one is the dry matter the second one is

0:10:35.200,0:10:38.079
the digestibility or the metabolisable

0:10:37.519,0:10:40.399
energy,

0:10:38.079,0:10:41.519
and those two I group together because

0:10:40.399,0:10:43.920
they are

0:10:41.519,0:10:44.959
a mathematical determination from one to

0:10:43.920,0:10:47.440
get to the other,

0:10:44.959,0:10:49.120

and the other one is the protein.

0:10:47.440,0:10:51.120
After those then, the most important

0:10:49.120,0:10:54.240
things is probably the lactic

0:10:51.120,0:10:56.640
acid to volatile fatty acid

0:10:54.240,0:10:58.240
ratio which isn't given but you can

0:10:56.640,0:11:00.160
calculate from your form. That just

0:10:58.240,0:11:02.720
gives you an idea of your

0:11:00.160,0:11:04.720
fermentation quality. But the things I've

0:11:02.720,0:11:06.399
focused on in this report have been the

0:11:04.720,0:11:08.399
protein and the digestibility and the

0:11:06.399,0:11:10.800
dry matter.

0:11:08.399,0:11:12.000
And those farmers who are producing the

0:11:10.800,0:11:14.800
best quality

0:11:12.000,0:11:16.959
silage, your report highlights some

0:11:14.800,0:11:18.720
quite striking statistics in terms of

0:11:16.959,0:11:20.320
the improvements they're seeing over and

0:11:18.720,0:11:22.720
above the average in terms of

0:11:20.320,0:11:24.240
of yield and productivity, share some of

0:11:22.720,0:11:27.600
those some of those

0:11:24.240,0:11:28.000
statistics with us if you can. Looking

0:11:27.600,0:11:31.760
at

0:11:28.000,0:11:32.560
the digestibility and the protein

0:11:31.760,0:11:36.079
content

0:11:32.560,0:11:38.399
of these silages, taking the top 25%

0:11:36.079,0:11:39.680
of those silages analysed versus the

0:11:38.399,0:11:42.480
average,

0:11:39.680,0:11:42.800
on a beef farm, so you talked about

0:11:42.480,0:11:45.200

0:11:42.800,0:11:46.720
quantity, I'm only measuring quantity in

0:11:45.200,0:11:48.160
terms of outputs,

0:11:46.720,0:11:49.760
and this is somewhere where there's a

0:11:48.160,0:11:52.000
big mistake on farm as well,

0:11:49.760,0:11:53.360
so in terms of beef the top 25% are

0:11:52.000,0:11:56.480
producing

0:11:53.360,0:11:59.200
live weight gains of by calculation

0:11:56.480,0:12:00.800
of 0.4 kilos per head per day

0:11:59.200,0:12:02.320
greater live weight gain than the

0:12:00.800,0:12:06.079
average.

0:12:02.320,0:12:08.959
In the milk or in the dairy sector it is 2.2

0:12:06.079,0:12:09.440

kilos of milk per cow per day. Now these

0:12:08.959,0:12:11.360
are

0:12:09.440,0:12:13.200
our values that are calculated from

0:12:11.360,0:12:13.839
knowing the energy requirements to

0:12:13.200,0:12:17.040
produce a

0:12:13.839,0:12:17.920
litre of milk or a kilogram of live

0:12:17.040,0:12:20.560
weight gain

0:12:17.920,0:12:22.959
and assuming an intake in the beef

0:12:20.560,0:12:25.040
sector of 10 kilos of

0:12:22.959,0:12:26.240
silage per day versus 15 kilos of

0:12:25.040,0:12:28.480
silage per day in the milk

0:12:26.240,0:12:29.680
sector. Now the reason why I just

0:12:28.480,0:12:31.360
slightly

0:12:29.680,0:12:33.760
changed what you said there, I'm looking

0:12:31.360,0:12:35.279
at yield of product.

0:12:33.760,0:12:36.639
How they get to that yield of product is

0:12:35.279,0:12:39.200
that they're not looking at yield of

0:12:36.639,0:12:40.880
grass in the field before they harvest,

0:12:39.200,0:12:42.399
and this is where some farmers slip up,

0:12:40.880,0:12:44.240
they look at yield of grass in the field

0:12:42.399,0:12:45.920
and think 'oh I've got a big yield'

0:12:44.240,0:12:47.680
but actually quality when you've got a

0:12:45.920,0:12:49.120
big yield is often lower

0:12:47.680,0:12:51.600
than if you've got a lower yield for

0:12:49.120,0:12:53.680
silage because the quality drops

0:12:51.600,0:12:55.680
as you get towards heading and seed

0:12:53.680,0:12:58.800
formation.

0:12:55.680,0:13:00.800
But the advantages and the

0:12:58.800,0:13:02.639
economic benefits of producing high

0:13:00.800,0:13:04.079
quality silage is staggering on those

0:13:02.639,0:13:04.399
figures that you've just shared with us

0:13:04.079,0:13:07.120
now

0:13:04.399,0:13:08.720
and it's a massive influence on

0:13:07.120,0:13:10.639
the performance of the business in terms

0:13:08.720,0:13:11.519
of reducing your reliance on input costs

0:13:10.639,0:13:14.639
as well?

0:13:11.519,0:13:16.720
Yes, to be honest I

0:13:14.639,0:13:18.720
only did this calculation just before we

0:13:16.720,0:13:21.839
started this podcast.

0:13:18.720,0:13:24.800

I calculated from the figures I've got.

0:13:21.839,0:13:26.160

If we take protein and we've got 300

0:13:24.800,0:13:29.200

tons of silage,

0:13:26.160,0:13:32.240

if you wanted to supplement your average

0:13:29.200,0:13:34.160

silage to get to the top 25 percent,

0:13:32.240,0:13:36.720

on that 300 tons of dry matter of

0:13:34.160,0:13:37.279

silage you'd need an extra 45 tons of a

0:13:36.720,0:13:39.920

20 percent

0:13:37.279,0:13:41.920

concentrate. When you calculate that

0:13:39.920,0:13:45.040

out in terms of costs taking the

0:13:41.920,0:13:47.360

the five year average of concentrate at

0:13:45.040,0:13:49.519

£220 per ton,

0:13:47.360,0:13:51.360

that works out at £10,000 roughly

0:13:49.519,0:13:52.720

speaking over that 300 tons of silage.

0:13:51.360,0:13:55.920

And if you just do it on a

0:13:52.720,0:13:57.920

on a ton of silage basis that's £33.50

0:13:55.920,0:14:01.279

for every ton of silage to

0:13:57.920,0:14:04.240

correct that protein

0:14:01.279,0:14:05.680

lack in that poorer quality silage. Now all I

0:14:04.240,0:14:07.600

would say is that

0:14:05.680,0:14:08.720
you want high protein silages for your

0:14:07.600,0:14:11.120
productive stock,

0:14:08.720,0:14:12.480
your high producing or your

0:14:11.120,0:14:15.440
milking cows,

0:14:12.480,0:14:16.480
your fattening and growing beef cattle

0:14:15.440,0:14:18.880
and

0:14:16.480,0:14:19.760
your pregnant ewes. If you're feeding your

0:14:18.880,0:14:22.000
dry cows,

0:14:19.760,0:14:23.279
be that sucklers or dairy, then you don't

0:14:22.000,0:14:25.839
want that quality.

0:14:23.279,0:14:26.959
This is one potential flaw in the

0:14:25.839,0:14:29.040
data set

0:14:26.959,0:14:31.199
that we've bulked everything together

0:14:29.040,0:14:32.720
because we don't know the information

0:14:31.199,0:14:35.199
within that data set, whether it was for

0:14:32.720,0:14:37.279
dry cows or productive stock.

0:14:35.199,0:14:38.959
But just making the assumption that much

0:14:37.279,0:14:40.000
of that silage is poorer quality will

0:14:38.959,0:14:43.120
be for

0:14:40.000,0:14:44.320
highly productive animals. Not

0:14:43.120,0:14:47.199
many people really

0:14:44.320,0:14:48.160
can afford to throw away £33 for

0:14:47.199,0:14:50.720
every ton of silage

0:14:48.160,0:14:52.720
dry matter they've made. And clearly you

0:14:50.720,0:14:55.279
work in this area, you work with farmers

0:14:52.720,0:14:57.760
and you understand the differences in

0:14:55.279,0:15:00.320
quality that you can find across farms,

0:14:57.760,0:15:03.279
but how surprised were you to see

0:15:00.320,0:15:04.000
some of this data and results? Were you

0:15:03.279,0:15:07.600
taken aback

0:15:04.000,0:15:09.360
by some of this? I wasn't taken aback

0:15:07.600,0:15:11.199
because I've been looking at data sets

0:15:09.360,0:15:14.720
like this for 15

0:15:11.199,0:15:16.240
20 years. I suppose

0:15:14.720,0:15:17.760
in some respects, for me personally, it's

0:15:16.240,0:15:19.360
a good thing because

0:15:17.760,0:15:21.279
I've got a few more years before I

0:15:19.360,0:15:23.040
retire so I need to carry on being

0:15:21.279,0:15:24.720
able to advise farmers.

0:15:23.040,0:15:26.639
But in another respect, it's

0:15:24.720,0:15:30.320
disappointing that

0:15:26.639,0:15:33.040
farmers aren't taking really

0:15:30.320,0:15:35.040
an assessment of that silage quality and

0:15:33.040,0:15:36.800
how they can influence their bottom line

0:15:35.040,0:15:38.880
by paying a little bit more attention to

0:15:36.800,0:15:41.440
detail.

0:15:38.880,0:15:42.320
I get very frustrated at times going on

0:15:41.440,0:15:44.480
farms

0:15:42.320,0:15:47.120
where you can spend half an hour with a

0:15:44.480,0:15:48.560
farmer, talking to them, or in a meeting,

0:15:47.120,0:15:50.399
and then somebody will turn around in

0:15:48.560,0:15:53.759
the audience and say 'yes but silage,

0:15:50.399,0:15:55.920
it's what I've got' and it's not!

0:15:53.759,0:15:57.920
There's a lot of effort that can go into

0:15:55.920,0:16:00.720
improving that quality

0:15:57.920,0:16:02.320
and the only thing that shouldn't be in

0:16:00.720,0:16:05.120
your

0:16:02.320,0:16:06.079

ability to change is the weather.

0:16:05.120,0:16:08.800
Everything else,

0:16:06.079,0:16:10.399
you have a focus on. The best farmers

0:16:08.800,0:16:13.440
even managed to

0:16:10.399,0:16:14.639
manage the weather to a degree compared

0:16:13.440,0:16:16.560
to your average farm.

0:16:14.639,0:16:17.680
If you were talking to a farmer now and

0:16:16.560,0:16:20.240
wanting to give

0:16:17.680,0:16:21.920
some advice around improving the quality

0:16:20.240,0:16:23.759
of their silage, what would be some quick

0:16:21.920,0:16:24.959
wins that they could do?

0:16:23.759,0:16:26.800
Those things which are within the

0:16:24.959,0:16:28.880
farmer's control that they could change

0:16:26.800,0:16:32.079
quite easily and see a difference in

0:16:28.880,0:16:36.000
the quality of the silage they produce?

0:16:32.079,0:16:39.199
There are three things

0:16:36.000,0:16:42.639
of equal importance. The first one

0:16:39.199,0:16:44.320
is looking at

0:16:42.639,0:16:46.320
your grass quality and I'm not saying

0:16:44.320,0:16:47.040
to look at the analysis. I'm saying

0:16:46.320,0:16:49.839
looking at

0:16:47.040,0:16:50.959
your grass quality requirements before

0:16:49.839,0:16:53.759
you harvest.

0:16:50.959,0:16:54.240
The biggest downside is that farmers

0:16:53.759,0:16:57.519
think

0:16:54.240,0:16:59.440
of yield of silage

0:16:57.519,0:17:01.199
rather than yield of meat or milk that

0:16:59.440,0:17:02.639
they produce from that silage.

0:17:01.199,0:17:04.000
If you could

0:17:02.639,0:17:04.880
have a pair of spectacles and you

0:17:04.000,0:17:06.400
could put them on and

0:17:04.880,0:17:08.240
walk into that field you

0:17:06.400,0:17:11.039
could see

0:17:08.240,0:17:12.000
beef hanging on a hook rather than grass

0:17:11.039,0:17:14.160
growing,

0:17:12.000,0:17:15.360
you would harvest your grass earlier

0:17:14.160,0:17:17.280
than you do.

0:17:15.360,0:17:19.839
Because your yield of beef is from an

0:17:17.280,0:17:20.799
earlier harvest before you get that stem

0:17:19.839,0:17:22.720
formation.

0:17:20.799,0:17:24.959
That's one aspect is actually

0:17:22.720,0:17:28.640
looking at that quality in terms of

0:17:24.959,0:17:31.039
yield of protein or energy

0:17:28.640,0:17:31.760
in the field per hectare rather than

0:17:31.039,0:17:35.120
yield of

0:17:31.760,0:17:37.200
grass dry matter. Probably before that then is

0:17:35.120,0:17:40.640
your fertiliser requirements.

0:17:37.200,0:17:43.120
Whilst the industry has

0:17:40.640,0:17:45.520
reduced fertiliser requirements, which in

0:17:43.120,0:17:48.640
many ways is a good thing in terms of

0:17:45.520,0:17:49.760
NVZ's and water pollution, we may have

0:17:48.640,0:17:51.679
reduced too far.

0:17:49.760,0:17:54.720
If we're not putting enough nitrogen,

0:17:51.679,0:17:57.200
and I must say sulphur now as well,

0:17:54.720,0:17:59.200
onto that grass for it to grow optimally,

0:17:57.200,0:18:00.400
to have that protein quality within that

0:17:59.200,0:18:03.679
grass,

0:18:00.400,0:18:04.240
all that comes from that access

0:18:03.679,0:18:07.360

to those

0:18:04.240,0:18:08.640
nitrogen sulphur nutrients it has, then

0:18:07.360,0:18:10.799
you're never going to get to the

0:18:08.640,0:18:13.600
required level of say,

0:18:10.799,0:18:14.640
my target would be 16 to 17 crude

0:18:13.600,0:18:15.840
protein in your grass.

0:18:14.640,0:18:16.880
If you haven't got that in your

0:18:15.840,0:18:18.000
silage then you're going to have to

0:18:16.880,0:18:20.400
supplement.

0:18:18.000,0:18:21.039
And then the third thing, is the way you

0:18:20.400,0:18:22.799
harvest

0:18:21.039,0:18:24.559
and looking after that

0:18:22.799,0:18:27.679
silage when it comes in

0:18:24.559,0:18:28.080
on that first day and

0:18:27.679,0:18:29.440
a half

0:18:28.080,0:18:32.000
when you're harvesting, from cutting

0:18:29.440,0:18:33.760
through to filling your clamp or baling,

0:18:32.000,0:18:35.760
because you can lose a lot of nutrients

0:18:33.760,0:18:37.840
then as well.

0:18:35.760,0:18:39.039
Have you come across a level of

0:18:37.840,0:18:41.280

resistance against

0:18:39.039,0:18:43.120

cutting silage earlier at a younger

0:18:41.280,0:18:44.160

stage because farmers are concerned

0:18:43.120,0:18:46.160

about

0:18:44.160,0:18:48.960

getting enough volume, enough bulk of

0:18:46.160,0:18:50.720

silage to see them through the winter?

0:18:48.960,0:18:52.480

At the risk of upsetting my father I

0:18:50.720,0:18:54.160

have this debate or had this debate when

0:18:52.480,0:18:54.720

he was still actively farming many many

0:18:54.160,0:18:59.039

times

0:18:54.720,0:19:01.840

and it is still the most

0:18:59.039,0:19:04.080

common thing that I face when I talk to

0:19:01.840,0:19:07.440

farmers 'oh but I won't have enough yield'.

0:19:04.080,0:19:10.960

The data shows that

0:19:07.440,0:19:15.120

if you cut earlier, your total grass

0:19:10.960,0:19:17.520

yield per hectare or per acre per year

0:19:15.120,0:19:19.760

is greater. The reason for that is,

0:19:17.520,0:19:21.679

when you cut late,

0:19:19.760,0:19:23.679

your crop is actually going into

0:19:21.679,0:19:25.919
dormancy. It's going into old age

0:19:23.679,0:19:27.520
and it takes longer for that crop to

0:19:25.919,0:19:29.600
start to regrow.

0:19:27.520,0:19:30.960
If you cut before you get to seed stem

0:19:29.600,0:19:33.200
formation,

0:19:30.960,0:19:34.240
then the next day the field is

0:19:33.200,0:19:36.320
greening up

0:19:34.240,0:19:38.320
and within a week you've got another

0:19:36.320,0:19:41.679
couple of inches growth there.

0:19:38.320,0:19:43.600
So cutting frequently,

0:19:41.679,0:19:45.120
or cutting early for that silage cut,

0:19:43.600,0:19:47.840
gives you better quality

0:19:45.120,0:19:49.520
grass silage. It gives you an

0:19:47.840,0:19:52.160
extended growing period

0:19:49.520,0:19:54.000
in effect. The additional benefit is that

0:19:52.160,0:19:54.720
because it's also green throughout the

0:19:54.000,0:19:56.880
crop

0:19:54.720,0:19:59.120
you have less problems in the silage

0:19:56.880,0:20:00.720
clamp, of the clamp heating

0:19:59.120,0:20:02.400

because you've brought in less yeast and

0:20:00.720,0:20:03.120
moulds which are in that dead part of the

0:20:02.400,0:20:05.679

0:20:03.120,0:20:07.360
grass in the field and survive the

0:20:05.679,0:20:09.120
preservation process so they're there

0:20:07.360,0:20:10.320
eating your nutrients at feed out as

0:20:09.120,0:20:11.919
well before the cows gets hold of them

0:20:10.320,0:20:16.000
or the sheep gets hold of them.

0:20:11.919,0:20:18.240
So yes it's a big impact, but if farmers

0:20:16.000,0:20:19.360
turn it round and looked at it in a

0:20:18.240,0:20:22.480
different way

0:20:19.360,0:20:25.440
in terms of total yield per field

0:20:22.480,0:20:27.200
rather than the yield in that cut. And the

0:20:25.440,0:20:28.960
only negative of cutting early

0:20:27.200,0:20:31.440
is if you're making clamp silage and

0:20:28.960,0:20:34.159
you're paying per unit area

0:20:31.440,0:20:35.280
a contractor to do it. With a bale

0:20:34.159,0:20:36.880
system there's no difference because

0:20:35.280,0:20:38.799
you're paying for the bale.

0:20:36.880,0:20:40.400
If you're cutting more frequently in

0:20:38.799,0:20:41.840
a dairy system and you have a good

0:20:40.400,0:20:43.200
relationship with your contractor, they

0:20:41.840,0:20:44.159
will know that if you're cutting more

0:20:43.200,0:20:46.400
frequently

0:20:44.159,0:20:47.200
you're doing less yield each time so

0:20:46.400,0:20:49.280
They, if you

0:20:47.200,0:20:50.480
have a good relationship with them, will

0:20:49.280,0:20:52.480
probably alter the

0:20:50.480,0:20:53.440
ways of paying them because they know

0:20:52.480,0:20:54.159
they're going to get the business and

0:20:53.440,0:20:57.520
they're going to have

0:20:54.159,0:20:59.200
more cuts to do for you. Interesting

0:20:57.520,0:21:01.200
that you pick up there on the way the

0:20:59.200,0:21:03.679
silage is done and the use of contractors,

0:21:01.200,0:21:05.760
have you noticed an increase shift

0:21:03.679,0:21:07.440
towards the use of contractors with the

0:21:05.760,0:21:08.320
ever increasing cost of machinery and

0:21:07.440,0:21:10.640
equipment?

0:21:08.320,0:21:13.440
Has that changed? I think over the years

0:21:10.640,0:21:17.360

that has changed inevitably

0:21:13.440,0:21:19.520
and I think there are issues around that.

0:21:17.360,0:21:21.120
But when you consider a brand

0:21:19.520,0:21:22.559
new forage harvester is going to set you

0:21:21.120,0:21:25.200
back a significant

0:21:22.559,0:21:26.320
amount of money, a quarter of a million

0:21:25.200,0:21:28.720
probably,

0:21:26.320,0:21:30.000
then you know it's not possible for

0:21:28.720,0:21:32.720
every farm to

0:21:30.000,0:21:34.400
run that sort of system. I have seen

0:21:32.720,0:21:36.720
farms that are used to make

0:21:34.400,0:21:38.240
clamp silage, relatively big farms

0:21:36.720,0:21:40.720
that have gone over to bale silage

0:21:38.240,0:21:43.120
because they felt that they couldn't afford

0:21:40.720,0:21:44.159
in the dairy sector to have their own

0:21:43.120,0:21:47.600
machinery.

0:21:44.159,0:21:52.000
Now there is no difference in terms

0:21:47.600,0:21:55.200
of silage quality

0:21:52.000,0:21:56.000
generically between a contractor and a

0:21:55.200,0:21:58.799
farmer.

0:21:56.000,0:22:01.039

In some ways many contractors will do a

0:21:58.799,0:22:03.039

better job than a farmer because

0:22:01.039,0:22:05.679

they have the machinery. They're doing it

0:22:03.039,0:22:06.559

as a main part, of you know it is a main

0:22:05.679,0:22:09.200

input for them

0:22:06.559,0:22:09.840

rather doing it once or twice a year.

0:22:09.200,0:22:12.320

However,

0:22:09.840,0:22:13.919

the drawback with the contractor is that

0:22:12.320,0:22:15.520

if you're in a queue,

0:22:13.919,0:22:17.520

you can't always get your silage cut

0:22:15.520,0:22:18.720

when you want it cut. Therefore, you do lose

0:22:17.520,0:22:20.400

that digestibility. There are

0:22:18.720,0:22:23.760

trade-off's with both but yes,

0:22:20.400,0:22:25.679

the economic investment in equipment

0:22:23.760,0:22:27.039

is massive these days and you know

0:22:25.679,0:22:30.320

contractors are doing

0:22:27.039,0:22:31.679

more and more. And one of the interesting

0:22:30.320,0:22:33.520

things that I

0:22:31.679,0:22:36.000

read in the report is that the data

0:22:33.520,0:22:37.840
highlights a widening of the time period

0:22:36.000,0:22:40.400
that silage is now made

0:22:37.840,0:22:41.919
and references made here to samples that

0:22:40.400,0:22:44.080
were analysed from some first

0:22:41.919,0:22:46.080
cuts as early as the 10th of February

0:22:44.080,0:22:46.799
and as late as the 18th of December.

0:22:46.080,0:22:49.280
That's almost

0:22:46.799,0:22:50.000
all year-round silage making. I used to

0:22:49.280,0:22:51.600
think it was that

0:22:50.000,0:22:53.120
some farmers wanted to be ahead

0:22:51.600,0:22:56.159
of the game and wanted to show I can

0:22:53.120,0:22:59.120
make silage in February. But,

0:22:56.159,0:23:00.559
if your grass growth is such, and you're

0:22:59.120,0:23:03.600
not going to use it

0:23:00.559,0:23:06.960
for grazing, then actually cutting that

0:23:03.600,0:23:08.880
silage at these extremes of the year

0:23:06.960,0:23:11.039
can be beneficial for that growth.

0:23:08.880,0:23:14.159
You are then starting

0:23:11.039,0:23:16.640
with a fresh growth for your next cut

0:23:14.159,0:23:18.240

and that actually has benefits in terms

0:23:16.640,0:23:19.760
of the quality and the

0:23:18.240,0:23:21.360
aerobic stability of that silage when

0:23:19.760,0:23:22.080
you're feeding it out. But part of this is

0:23:21.360,0:23:25.120
climate change.

0:23:22.080,0:23:26.080
I know when I first moved to

0:23:25.120,0:23:28.240
Pontrhydygroes

0:23:26.080,0:23:29.440
30 years ago this time of year I'd have

0:23:28.240,0:23:30.960
yellow fields.

0:23:29.440,0:23:32.880
Apart from the fact the snow cover on

0:23:30.960,0:23:34.720
them today, they are green.

0:23:32.880,0:23:36.400
We are having much warmer winters

0:23:34.720,0:23:37.840
and grass growth is not stopping so we

0:23:36.400,0:23:40.640
need to utilise that grass.

0:23:37.840,0:23:41.360
We've also got the added benefits of the

0:23:40.640,0:23:44.720
new

0:23:41.360,0:23:46.000
grass species that do tend to have wider

0:23:44.720,0:23:48.880
windows of growth

0:23:46.000,0:23:50.960
We must utilise this grass whether

0:23:48.880,0:23:54.320
it's by grazing

0:23:50.960,0:23:55.840
or in ensiling. We can argue about the

0:23:54.320,0:23:56.799
weather conditions at those times of

0:23:55.840,0:23:58.240
year that they're not going to get a

0:23:56.799,0:23:59.760
good wilt and they're not,

0:23:58.240,0:24:01.760
but I'm not going to criticise those

0:23:59.760,0:24:03.200
farms for doing it if they have that

0:24:01.760,0:24:03.520
grass there and they're not going to use

0:24:03.200,0:24:06.480
it

0:24:03.520,0:24:08.400
for grazing. Clearly there are a number

0:24:06.480,0:24:11.600
of economic benefits of making

0:24:08.400,0:24:12.320
high quality silage but your report also

0:24:11.600,0:24:14.320
refers to

0:24:12.320,0:24:16.159
the environmental benefits of producing

0:24:14.320,0:24:20.080
good quality silage.

0:24:16.159,0:24:21.360
Yes. Farmers over the years, and

0:24:20.080,0:24:22.960
I think it's dropped off in the last

0:24:21.360,0:24:24.240
couple of years, have been criticised for

0:24:22.960,0:24:26.240
methane emissions

0:24:24.240,0:24:28.559
or they've been the target for methane

0:24:26.240,0:24:28.799
emissions. One thing is true that you

0:24:28.559,0:24:31.279
know

0:24:28.799,0:24:32.000
cows, sheep, ruminants produce methane.

0:24:31.279,0:24:34.240
It's a natural

0:24:32.000,0:24:36.799
end product of the rumen. The way we

0:24:34.240,0:24:38.480
can overcome that negative impact of

0:24:36.799,0:24:40.799
methane is actually to make more meat

0:24:38.480,0:24:41.120
and milk for the same level of methane

0:24:40.799,0:24:44.000
or

0:24:41.120,0:24:46.000
a lesser level of methane. The key

0:24:44.000,0:24:48.880
thing that affects that methane from

0:24:46.000,0:24:51.440
forages is actually the digestibility.

0:24:48.880,0:24:55.039
The poorer the digestibility,

0:24:51.440,0:24:56.720
the more methane you produce because

0:24:55.039,0:24:58.880
you're not having such an efficient

0:24:56.720,0:25:00.960
rumen. It's allowing the methanogenic

0:24:58.880,0:25:03.279
bacteria in the rumen to actually

0:25:00.960,0:25:04.320
utilise more of that energy for methane

0:25:03.279,0:25:06.240
production.

0:25:04.320,0:25:07.440

If we just take the figures, and they

0:25:06.240,0:25:10.960
are headline figures,

0:25:07.440,0:25:14.159
for methane production in the top 25%

0:25:10.960,0:25:16.080
versus the average, and this is assuming

0:25:14.159,0:25:18.320
300 tons of dry matter of silage or a

0:25:16.080,0:25:21.279
thousand tons of fresh matter,

0:25:18.320,0:25:22.799
then it's 1.1 million more liters more

0:25:21.279,0:25:24.640
methane

0:25:22.799,0:25:26.000
on the average farm compared to the top

0:25:24.640,0:25:27.760
25%.

0:25:26.000,0:25:29.039
Now rather than farmers thinking I'm

0:25:27.760,0:25:29.919
having a go at them about producing

0:25:29.039,0:25:31.760
methane,

0:25:29.919,0:25:33.360
when you produce methane it's an energy

0:25:31.760,0:25:35.679
loss to your livestock.

0:25:33.360,0:25:37.120
In terms of gross energy it's around

0:25:35.679,0:25:39.200
8%.

0:25:37.120,0:25:40.240
If you're producing less methane

0:25:39.200,0:25:41.600
because you've got better quality

0:25:40.240,0:25:43.120
silage, that means that energy's going

0:25:41.600,0:25:45.200
into meat or milk production.

0:25:43.120,0:25:46.720
It's something you can sell off the farm.

0:25:45.200,0:25:50.400
It's about

0:25:46.720,0:25:52.400
looking at methane as a loss. It's like,

0:25:50.400,0:25:53.679
if you store your fertiliser wrong and

0:25:52.400,0:25:55.760
it flows down the river

0:25:53.679,0:25:56.960
it's pollution but it's also an economic

0:25:55.760,0:25:57.679
loss. But you've paid for it and you've

0:25:56.960,0:25:59.600
seen it

0:25:57.679,0:26:00.960
whereas this methane loss, you don't see

0:25:59.600,0:26:04.320
it because it's always been happening.

0:26:00.960,0:26:05.919
But, if we can reduce it,

0:26:04.320,0:26:08.080
you'll get some money back in your

0:26:05.919,0:26:09.120
pocket. That's quite an effective

0:26:08.080,0:26:11.440
way of looking at

0:26:09.120,0:26:12.640
at that problem isn't it. Now we're

0:26:11.440,0:26:15.760
recording this podcast

0:26:12.640,0:26:17.600
at the end of January, Dave is it too

0:26:15.760,0:26:18.080
early to be getting ready for this

0:26:17.600,0:26:21.279
year's

0:26:18.080,0:26:22.000
silage cut? No it definitely isn't. I

0:26:21.279,0:26:24.400
think

0:26:22.000,0:26:25.760
you know silage is something that should

0:26:24.400,0:26:27.360
be on your mind

0:26:25.760,0:26:29.679
and it's something that you can prepare

0:26:27.360,0:26:32.159
for. What are the key things farmers

0:26:29.679,0:26:32.960
should be doing to prepare now? So I

0:26:32.159,0:26:35.919
think

0:26:32.960,0:26:38.159
there are a number of things. Planning

0:26:35.919,0:26:38.480
fertiliser requirements would be number

0:26:38.159,0:26:40.400
one

0:26:38.480,0:26:42.159
so that you can get that in, even if

0:26:40.400,0:26:43.679
you're not able to spread it.

0:26:42.159,0:26:45.360
I think the other key one is actually

0:26:43.679,0:26:46.640
assessing this year's silage quality

0:26:45.360,0:26:50.080
because you're feeding it out.

0:26:46.640,0:26:50.720
Be critical. Assess that in terms

0:26:50.080,0:26:52.240
of

0:26:50.720,0:26:54.880

what you need, what you needed and what

0:26:52.240,0:26:56.880
you got. The other one

0:26:54.880,0:26:58.559
is to walk your fields and look at your

0:26:56.880,0:27:01.600
grass growth and look at

0:26:58.559,0:27:02.000
the quality of those lays. And

0:27:01.600,0:27:03.760

0:27:02.000,0:27:05.039
because you're feeding, then set yourself

0:27:03.760,0:27:06.400
a target for what you would have liked

0:27:05.039,0:27:07.360
to have had this year compared to what

0:27:06.400,0:27:08.720
you have got.

0:27:07.360,0:27:10.799
Then finally, I think you need to

0:27:08.720,0:27:12.559
think about

0:27:10.799,0:27:14.159
whether you're using a contractor or

0:27:12.559,0:27:15.840
you're making it yourself.

0:27:14.159,0:27:17.200
What you need to do to discuss with the

0:27:15.840,0:27:19.679
contractor or

0:27:17.200,0:27:20.880
looking at your machinery. And I

0:27:19.679,0:27:22.960
remember we were chatting

0:27:20.880,0:27:24.000
just before we recorded this podcast

0:27:22.960,0:27:25.279
Dave around

0:27:24.000,0:27:26.880
thinking about farmers who might be

0:27:25.279,0:27:28.559
listening to this podcast whilst making

0:27:26.880,0:27:30.799
their silage in their tractor cabs and

0:27:28.559,0:27:32.799
and you recalled an article that you

0:27:30.799,0:27:34.880
wrote for the Farmer's Guardian some

0:27:32.799,0:27:36.640
years ago about the seven sins of

0:27:34.880,0:27:39.679
silage making. Tell us

0:27:36.640,0:27:41.200
a bit about that. I did an

0:27:39.679,0:27:43.200
article. It was specifically for bale

0:27:41.200,0:27:44.000
silage, the seven sins of bale silage

0:27:43.200,0:27:46.399
making, and

0:27:44.000,0:27:48.000
I was talking to somebody, I bumped

0:27:46.399,0:27:50.960
into a farmer

0:27:48.000,0:27:51.760
regularly and he said 'oh a really good

0:27:50.960,0:27:54.480
article Dave,

0:27:51.760,0:27:55.919
I photocopied it, I laminated it and I

0:27:54.480,0:27:57.120
put it in the tractor cab for my dad to

0:27:55.919,0:27:59.440
read whilst he was making the

0:27:57.120,0:27:59.440
silage'

0:28:01.279,0:28:06.399

Has it had an impact that's the question?

0:28:03.520,0:28:08.720

It did for a while.

0:28:06.399,0:28:12.000

I think the dad's possibly retired a bit

0:28:08.720,0:28:12.000

now and the son lost it.

0:28:12.640,0:28:16.559

As a final question Dave and this is the

0:28:14.880,0:28:19.360

question we were asking all guests

0:28:16.559,0:28:20.080

uh on the Ear to the Ground podcast this year

0:28:19.360,0:28:22.240

and that is,

0:28:20.080,0:28:23.600

how would you describe a successful

0:28:22.240,0:28:26.640

farmer?

0:28:23.600,0:28:28.960

I think farming is a challenge,

0:28:26.640,0:28:30.640

everything's changing year in year out

0:28:28.960,0:28:31.679

and I think as the most successful

0:28:30.640,0:28:35.360

farmers

0:28:31.679,0:28:36.640

it's about adaptability and adapting to

0:28:35.360,0:28:39.200

what

0:28:36.640,0:28:40.559

things are thrown at them. The main two

0:28:39.200,0:28:42.640

are to be honest

0:28:40.559,0:28:44.320

weather and political. I think

0:28:42.640,0:28:47.279

that ability to adapt

0:28:44.320,0:28:48.960
and that ability to utilise your own

0:28:47.279,0:28:50.799
environment and what you have on your

0:28:48.960,0:28:52.559
farm to the best

0:28:50.799,0:28:54.159
is the thing that makes a successful

0:28:52.559,0:28:56.080
farmer.

0:28:54.159,0:28:57.679
I guess you expected me to say

0:28:56.080,0:28:58.880

0:28:57.679,0:29:00.640
it's the person that makes the best quality silage.

0:28:58.880,0:29:04.080

0:29:00.640,0:29:05.520
If you're a farmer that's producing

0:29:04.080,0:29:07.360
lamb and you can produce it all from

0:29:05.520,0:29:08.880
grazed grass then

0:29:07.360,0:29:10.399
it's about grassland management it's not

0:29:08.880,0:29:13.120
about silage making.

0:29:10.399,0:29:15.200
Just as a little anecdote,

0:29:13.120,0:29:17.440
I judged the all Wales bale silage

0:29:15.200,0:29:21.360
competition and the winner one year

0:29:17.440,0:29:23.760
used very little silage. He dominated

0:29:21.360,0:29:26.720
his feeding regime with grazed grass but

0:29:23.760,0:29:28.720

the silage he made was top quality.

0:29:26.720,0:29:30.880

I think it's about that it's about

0:29:28.720,0:29:32.799

adaptability and farmers do need to

0:29:30.880,0:29:34.640

be adaptable this year

0:29:32.799,0:29:36.559

probably more than most. It's about

0:29:34.640,0:29:38.559

looking at what's ahead of you

0:29:36.559,0:29:40.480

and adapting to try and meet the targets

0:29:38.559,0:29:42.640

that you need to.

0:29:40.480,0:29:43.520

Well that's some pretty good advice to

0:29:42.640,0:29:46.399

wrap up this

0:29:43.520,0:29:47.039

Podcast. Dr Dave Davies, thank you for

0:29:46.399,0:29:49.440

joining us

0:29:47.039,0:29:51.679

on Ear to the Ground. I've learned a lot

0:29:49.440,0:29:53.760

about silage over the last half an hour

0:29:51.679,0:29:55.279

and I'm sure our listeners have as well.

0:29:53.760,0:29:58.159

On behalf of Farming Connect,

0:29:55.279,0:30:00.080

thank you for joining us. Thanks Aled, my

0:29:58.159,0:30:02.000

pleasure too.

0:30:00.080,0:30:03.600

For more information on the services

0:30:02.000,0:30:04.720

available please visit the Farming

0:30:03.600,0:30:06.399

Connect website

0:30:04.720,0:30:08.159

or get in touch with your local

0:30:06.399,0:30:10.159

development officer.

0:30:08.159,0:30:12.320

Well, that's it for this episode. We'll be

0:30:10.159,0:30:14.000

back in two weeks' time with plenty more

0:30:12.320,0:30:15.760

but in the meantime, on behalf of the

0:30:14.000,0:30:17.760

team at Farming Connect and myself,

0:30:15.760,0:30:23.840

Aled Jones, thank you for listening and

0:30:17.760,0:30:23.840

goodbye for now.

0:30:26.520,0:30:34.000

[Music]

0:30:37.760,0:30:39.840