

Patz LINK



YOUR LINK TO PROFIT



Tower vs. Bunker...

Which silo fits your farm?



According to Brian Holmes, University of Wisconsin Extension Agricultural Engineer, both tower and horizontal silos can be used for high-moisture forage.

Of course, horizontal silos take up more ground space, while tower silos take up "sky space", so a farm's layout is a factor when choosing which type of silo to build.

Many dairy producers are concerned about using horizontal silos because they believe their feed loss will be greater than with a tower silo.

According to Holmes, dry matter losses in a well managed tower silo range from 2 to 15 percent, with 8 percent being about the average. The dry matter loss in a properly sized and managed bunker is typically in the range of 10 to 15 percent. In poorly managed bunkers, dry matter losses can be as high as 30 to 40 percent.

"Proper management is really the key," Holmes said.

"Annual costs are lower for a bunker silo with good management, but towers are a little more forgiving of mismanagement."

Leroy Shefchik, President of the International Silo Association, disagrees with that conclusion. "A tower silo will outperform cost-wise in the long run," Shefchik said. "Even if you do a perfect job of packing a bunker silo and a perfect job covering it, there are still bigger losses. Labor is also a factor with bunkers. The total process of packing and covering takes more hours and so does feeding." Shefchik estimates that despite initial construction costs being nearly three times higher, the cost of the two silo types is the same after seven or eight years because of higher losses and labor costs associated with bunker silos. "After seven or eight years, the profits go in the farmers' pocket," he said. In a tower silo, spoilage is

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minimized because feed is taken from the top, Shefchik explained.

Good management includes filling a silo with material at the proper moisture level. Generally, the moisture content of tower silo silage should be 50-65 percent, Holmes said. Horizontal silos can handle corn silage with 65-70 percent moisture and hay silage with a moisture content of 60-65 percent. The higher moisture content required by horizontal silos can be a blessing or a curse. On one hand, a farmer can harvest earlier. On the other hand, he must harvest earlier or product can get too dry and might not ferment properly.

Another issue to consider when deciding on the type and size of silo, Holmes said, is the way crops are harvested. New self-propelled forage harvesters are twice as fast as conventional tractor pulled harvesters. Many people consider the filling rates of tower silos to be incapable of keeping pace with the custom harvester. However, tower silos across the country are being filled at rates exceeding 100 tons per hour, making custom harvesters think twice about them. Earl Ray Shirk of Groffsdale Custom Harvesting reports consistently filling 20 x 80 foot tower silos in five hours. He runs a 175-horsepower tractor connected to a blower with a 60-inch fan at 540 rpm.

Given the lower storage losses and better feed quality, many consider the tower silo the most economical system to store feed. This is good news for many dairy producers who may be considering bunker storage because of the slower filling of tower silos.

The University of Wisconsin's bunker density calculator suggests that using a 10-foot maximum height of silage at 65 percent moisture with a 6-inch layer thickness, a 30,000-pound tractor can properly pack only 50 tons per hour. To keep up with the harvester, a farmer may not take the time to pack the bunker silo properly, resulting in increased spoilage down the road.

"You may find that you have to increase packing tractor weight and add more tractors if the producer wants to get a reasonable job of packing done in a bunker. In addition to packing, proper management of a bunker silo means covering it to keep the air and rain out," Holmes said. Phil Miller, Sales Manager for Wieser Concrete, a manufacturer of precast concrete bunker silos, agreed. "You must pack and cover your bunker silo," he said, "or don't build one. Bunker silos must be covered to get the best value."

Which silo fits your farm? This question can only be answered after careful analysis of your farm layout, the level of management you are committed to, the moisture level at which you want to harvest, and the way you want to harvest your crops. After considering all of these factors, you can select the "silo" that best fits your operation.

Source: Wisconsin Public Service/Farm News and June 2001 issue of *Hoard's Dairyman*
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SUCCESSION PLANNING

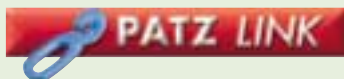
Wealth amounting to billions of dollars will change hands over the next 15 years as the parents of the so-called "baby boom" generation retire, die and eventually transfer assets to their children.

It's not easy to ask the questions which are essential in succession planning. Here are some examples of "tough" questions to ask:

- Do you believe that the children interested in succeeding you have the necessary business and farming skills? If not, what can be done to train them and would they accept your opinion?
- Are you prepared to give up partial or full control of the farm? If you want to phase out gradually, can you and your children work together?
- If your children are married, how stable are those marriages? Are you prepared to discuss the use of marriage contracts in your plan?
- Can your children afford to assume ownership and management of the family farm?
- How do you intend to provide for the children who are not interested in the farm?
- Do you need retirement income from the farm?
- How can the farm generate enough income to support your retirement and the family members succeeding you?

Dealing with the tough issues is important in any succession plan.

Dealing with the tough issues is important in any succession plan. Don't let difficult issues fester. They have a habit of exploding at the worst time and could postpone succession for a long time.



Hiring Extra Help *on the farm*

During the spring, it's time to think about crops and planting. It's also time to consider how your barn work will get done when the fieldwork begins.

"Dairy farm businesses that produce their own crops need to recognize that their labor and management requirements increase dramatically during planting and harvest times. In many cases, dairy managers give priority to field work because they know how critical it is to harvest and plant in a timely manner. When the same work force that is normally employed for barn work is pressed into service in the field, stress results," says Richard Stup, a Senior Extension Associate with the Penn. State Dairy Alliance.

Workers will either rush through their barn work to get into the field, or a skeleton crew will be left to do the work that normally employs more people. In either case, the result is usually a reduction in the quality and quantity of care given to the milking herd, Stup said.

Stup said dairy producers should carefully consider these scenarios:

- How much less dry matter will cows eat on a given day because the feeder didn't have time to clean out the feed bunks? How much milk production will this cost me?
- If the herdsman wasn't driving the pack tractor on the bunker silo, would he have diagnosed that cow with ketosis before she developed a displaced abomasum?
- So we don't watch for heats as closely in May and June, we can always catch up on breeding during July and August, right?

The costs associated with neglecting cow care and management may greatly outweigh the cost of hiring additional labor

"The costs associated with neglecting cow care and management may greatly outweigh the cost of hiring additional labor," Stup emphasized.

Regardless of which option you choose, there will be costs involved, Stup added. Choosing not to employ additional labor will lead to hidden costs in the form of lost productivity.

"An adequate supply of well-trained labor is the only way to ensure that you can both provide plenty of high-quality care to the milking herd and complete the fieldwork in a timely manner. Start planning early so that you will have a well-trained work force in place before the pressure begins," he said.

Source: AgWeb News



Dairy producers have three main choices for getting work done during the hectic spring season, Stup said.

1 Use the services of custom equipment operators.

"You could simply stop using the dairy work force to perform field operations and hire others to do it. This frees the dairy work force to continue their work routines," Stup said.

2 Hire additional labor to operate the field equipment.

There are a few disadvantages with this option, however, Stup noted. "Fieldwork is often performed on a last-minute basis; you must wait for the weather to be right, and then try to get everything done in a short period of time. It is often difficult to schedule people to work for you on short notice, and there is little opportunity to train people in advance on how to operate the equipment.

3 Bring in seasonal help for certain parts of the dairy operation.

Milking, calf feeding, cleanup, and bedding are dairy jobs that someone must perform year round. Dairy producers can hire and train additional labor to cover these jobs during the busiest parts of the crop season. "This frees the regular work force (often family members or long-term employees with equipment operating experience) to do fieldwork on a short-notice basis.

SAFETY "WHY NOT?"

"One reason I like Patz and Patz equipment is they are concerned about farm safety and, ultimately, that affects my family's safety."

It's mid-afternoon on Hope Acres Dairy, a farm, owned by the Bryen Handschke family in Pine River, Wisconsin, the 'right after feeding' and the 'just before milking' time. It's time to do the miscellaneous chores, which there are always plenty of on the farm. Bryen needs to go up in the silo to make adjustments to the silo unloader.

When he started, he decided to use the Remote Push Button Station (power lockout), just because that's what it said to do in the instruction manual. He really didn't think it would make much difference since he was the only one home anyway, **but ...why not?**

Like most jobs on the farm, one thing led to another, and it took longer than he thought it would. He was still up

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ELECTRICAL SAFETY... A PRIORITY

Safety should always be your first priority when installing or inspecting the electrical system on your farm. A system that was improperly installed or has deteriorated over time can result in safety hazards, including electric shock and fire.

According to Wisconsin Public Service, many other negative impacts and hidden costs may occur as a result of poor electrical safety.

- Livestock may suffer from failure or interruption of ventilation fans.
- Fire losses, including buildings and livestock may result. Even if you're fully insured, months of production will be lost.
- Lower meat or milk production due to stray voltage. It can be caused by deteriorating wiring for waterers, feeders, motors and other equipment.
- Early replacement of equipment due to inadequate or faulty wiring.
- Increased insurance premiums or refusal of insurance coverage due to wiring systems that do not comply with electrical codes.

The following short check list offers some recommendations to prevent problems and keep you and your loved ones safe.

- ✓ Did a qualified electrician install your electrical system?
- ✓ Was all wiring installed in accordance with the National Electrical Code (NEC)?
- ✓ Are your fixtures and material approved for agricultural use by the NEC?
- ✓ Are your fixtures located in a clean, dry area?
- ✓ Is an appropriately sealed cover used on all switches and outlets?
- ✓ Do all overhead and underground wires meet minimum safety clearances?
- ✓ Is the service entrance panel to each of your buildings properly grounded?
- ✓ Do you have ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) in damp or wet areas?
- ✓ Do you have an effective rodent control program to prevent rodent damage to wiring?
- ✓ Have provisions been made to minimize stray voltage?
- ✓ Are your buildings equipped with a lightning protection system or surge arrestor?
- ✓ Do you use totally enclosed motors that are designed for farm duty?
- ✓ Does each motor circuit have overload protection?

It is also important to establish an action plan for electrical accidents and practice it at least once a year with family and farm workers. A successfully carried out action plan could mean the difference between a tragic ending and a happy ending for your family and farm.

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in the silo when his two boys came home from school and were going to get a head start on the feeding chores. As he continued working, he heard voices at the bottom of the silo. "Where's dad? The unloader isn't working," said one of his sons. Bryen could hear them hitting the "on" switch while discussing what the problem could be.

Bryen could see first hand the importance of the Remote Push Button Station on his Patz unloader. "One reason I like Patz and Patz equipment is they are concerned about farm safety and, ultimately, that affects my family's safety," says Bryen.

Imagine what could have happened if Bryen hadn't said, "**Why Not?**"