



**SARA MEIDLINGER**  
519.917.2225  
smeidlinger@prideseed.com  
@meidlinger09

**ALANA SERHAN**  
306.278.7797  
aserhan@prideseed.com  
@alana\_serhan

# Making Good Quality Corn Silage

Corn silaging season is quickly approaching in the Canadian Prairies. As this is a busy time for farmers and retailers, below are a few quick tips to consider when cutting your corn silage crop.



Unloading chopped silage in bunker.



## Tips #1: Harvest at the correct moisture

- Ideal whole plant moisture for harvest: 62-68% moisture (38-32% dry matter).
  - 62-68% moisture range can correlate with 1/2 to 3/4 milk line progression, but doing a harvest sample is the best way to check whole plant moisture before cutting the whole field
- Different storage methods will require different ideal whole plant moistures for optimal ensiling conditions
- Approximate dry-down rate: 0.5%/day

## Tip #2: Get the right chop length

- The theoretical length of cut (TLC) also known as target chop length: 1/2" to 3/4"
- Silage chopped at the TLC will pack more firmly and have increased palatability for livestock
  - Particles that are cut too coarse will reduce packing efficiency and can cause silage to spoil due to poor fermentation
  - Particles cut too fine can reduce palatability and is a less effective source of roughage

## Tip #3: Packing the pit properly

- The purpose of packing the pit is to remove excess oxygen than can inhibit the ensiling process.
- Typical rule of thumb: 800lbs of tractor for every ton of silage delivered to the pit per hour
  - Want to pack approx. 6" of silage particles at a time too avoid the development of air pockets between layers

## Tip #4: Consider using bacterial inoculants

- The ensiling process relies on bacteria to produce lactic acid to “pickle” the silage and prevent the silage from spoiling and minimize loss
  - Lactic acid-producing bacteria occur naturally on the chopped silage, but other bacteria are also present and are competing for the resources the lactic acid-producing bacteria require to “pickle” the chopped silage.
    - These bacteria work in anaerobic conditions which is why getting the right chop length and good packing is critical
  - Lactic acid-producing bacterial inoculants are alive and inactive until rehydrated with moisture from the chopped silage (one of numerous critical reasons for ideal harvest moistures) and can greatly improve ensiling process
- Consider this:** Bacterial inoculants may have a greater benefit on corn silage particles that are immature, damaged from heat and drought stress or has had exposure to heavy frost
- Depending on the operation, a Lactic acid-producing bacteria inoculant may not be necessary but a hetero-fermenting bacteria (*L. buchneri*) can be used to increase improve bunk face management



*Packing the pit.*

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Website: <https://myfarmlife.com/livestock/3-best-tips-for-packing-silage-piles/>

Website: <https://wayne.osu.edu/sites/wayne/files/imce/5%20Key%20points%20to%20make%20high%20quality%20corn%20silage.pdf>

Podcast: <https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/ladies-and-gentleman-boys-and-girls-its-chow-time/id1518350369?i=1000490025865>

On behalf of **PRIDE Seeds** and **Canterra Seeds** teams, all the best with harvest and stay safe!

Keep an eye out for **2020 trial data** on **www.prideseed.com** coming soon!



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