



## **Feed Sampling**

*By John McGregor, MFGA Extension Support*

This month I have had a number of inquiries about taking forage samples. Remember that a feed analysis is only as good as the sample submitted. It is therefore recommended that you provide individual samples for each type of feed available making sure the sample is representative of each lot of feed.

For forage samples, use a commercial forage sampler. Take core samples from 15-20 bales at random for each lot of hay. If mixtures of different forages are being fed, sample the feeds in proportion to approximate the feed offered to the stock. It is preferred to sample each feed individually.

Square bales are sampled at the end of the bale, between the two twines, pushing the full length of the sampler tube into the bale.

Round bales are sampled at the rounded side of the bale, at the largest diameter (center) of the bale. Place all collected core samples in a container and mix prior to preparation of the sample for submission.

Silage samples need to be taken from several locations on the silage pit, pile, or tube. Tightly pack the sample in a plastic bag, excluding as much air as possible. Seal the sample and freeze the sample prior to submission to a lab. Freezing prevents fermentation and degradation of the sample prior to drying and analysis. Submit samples early in the week to prevent spoilage from transportation delays over a weekend.

Samples from an open silage pit, pile or tube should be taken from the freshest part of the face. Collect small quantities from various sites from the face to establish a composite sample. Mix thoroughly to provide a representative sample.

Where the silo, pit or tube is not opened, a series of four to six holes can be dug from the top with a posthole auger or suitable equipment. Remove spoiled silage prior to taking the sample. Mix the samples together and submit a representative sample. Sample holes need to be repacked with the silage that had been removed and the plastic resealed to prevent spoilage.

Proper handling of the sample between the farm and laboratory ensures the most accurate results.

Ensure the sample size is adequate. Consult with the feed lab for appropriate quantity. I have found that a sample about the size of a bread bag is more than adequate but don't use a bread bag unless you turn it inside out. Use plastic bags in all cases to obtain accurate feed moisture levels.

Label the sample with a description that is meaningful. This could be by land identification, name, or storage location at the farm. Use this description on the sample submission forms so the information is on the test report.

The MFGA uses Central Testing Lab in Winnipeg to analysis its feed samples for the Green Gold program but there are other labs that can do feed analysis in Mb and in the US. You can check with your local MAFRD office or your feed representative for their suggestions. If you are looking for a feed probe to test bales most of the MAFRD offices have probes that you can borrow free of charge.

Adapted from [Foragebeef.ca](http://Foragebeef.ca) [Feed Sampling](#)