

ENHANCING FEED QUALITY

Lallemand's take on why CFU count alone doesn't tell the full story when evaluating inoculants.

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More isn't necessarily better when it comes to comparing silage inoculants from Novonesis.

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When fuel is expensive, silage becomes more valuable

The most efficient operations focus on converting every gallon of fuel into high-quality, usable feed. Explore the three practical ways that help reduce fuel use when making corn silage and other forage crops.

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Three Smart Ways to Cut Fuel Costs in Silage Production Without Sacrificing Quality

Felipe X. Amaro, PAS, Ph.D., Global Technical Support and R&D, Passion Ag

Fuel markets have become increasingly volatile, with diesel prices rising sharply in recent months. In the U.S., off-road diesel prices are often running more than 30% higher than the same period last year, depending on region and supply. That matters because silage production is one of the most fuel-intensive operations on the farm. Fuel alone typically accounts for 8% to 15% of total silage costs. With current prices, that could add roughly 5% to overall production costs this season. In practical terms, every pass across the field, every load hauled, and every hour spent packing now carries a higher cost. And once silage is stored, it is worth more than ever because higher fuel, fertilizer and labor costs are already built into it. The solution is not to cut back, but to operate more efficiently without sacrificing silage quality. Here are the three practical ways to reduce fuel use when making corn silage and other forage crops.

1. Eliminate unnecessary field passes

Every extra trip across the field adds fuel, labor and wear, often without improving the final result. This is especially relevant in systems involving tedding, raking, or merging such as alfalfa and grass silages. Tight planning, reduced overlap and disciplined execution can significantly lower fuel use. In many cases, improving logistics can eliminate an operation entirely without affecting yield or silage fermentation.

2. Improve harvesting and haulage efficiency

The harvest chain – chopping, transport and packing – accounts for the highest fuel demand. Poor coordination leads to idle time, bottlenecks and underused equipment. Matching haulage capacity to harvester output, reducing haul distances when possible, and optimizing machine setup (knife sharpness, processor settings, tire pressure, and engine load) can deliver meaningful fuel savings while improving crop flow and packing consistency.

3. Protect silage in storage

This may not seem like a direct fuel-saving measure, but in a high-cost year, it is one of the most important. By the time silage reaches the bunker, a major investment has already been made. Losses from poor packing, oxygen infiltration or spoilage waste not only valuable feed, but also the fuel used to produce it. Proper packing density, rapid sealing and using good quality oxygen barrier films such as Passion Yellow and Passion Combo are essential.

Bottom line

When fuel is expensive, silage becomes more valuable. Saving a few gallons in the field matters. Preventing tons of silage loss matters more. The most efficient operations focus on both, ensuring every gallon of fuel is converted into high-quality, usable feed.





It's Not Just the CFU: Why the Right Inoculant Is About More Than the Numbers

By Renato Schmidt, Ph.D., Forage Products Specialist, Lallemand Animal Nutrition

In today's forage inoculant discussions, CFU counts are often front and center. Product labels and marketing claims increasingly emphasize higher colony-forming units (CFU), creating the impression that more is always better. While CFU count plays an important role in silage fermentation success, focusing on the number alone oversimplifies a much more complex equation. The reality is this: It's not just about CFU count. It's about using the right strain, supported by the right research and technology, for the right application at the right time.

Understanding what CFUs really represent

The CFU count represents the number of viable bacteria applied per gram of forage. Reaching minimum CFU thresholds is essential to ensure beneficial lactic acid bacteria dominate the natural epiphytic population and drive a rapid, controlled fermentation. Many studies suggest that CFU levels around 100,000 per gram are commonly used to support efficient fermentation under typical conditions, while higher effective doses are required when improved aerobic stability is the goal. Beyond that point, CFU count alone does not guarantee better results.

One reason CFU levels can vary widely between products is differences in strain efficiency and production technology. Advances in microbial selection, fermentation, stabilization and formulation allow modern inoculants to deliver highly active, well-adapted strains that perform reliably at normal CFU counts. These strains are selected for fast growth, strong metabolic activity and the ability to outcompete undesirable microbes under real-world silage conditions. By contrast, CFU application rates may vary depending on strain characteristics, formulation and intended use. This can make direct CFU comparisons between products misleading if strain performance and viability are not considered.

Matching the right strain to the right silage challenge

Strain specificity also matters because not all silage challenges are the same. A product designed to accelerate initial fermentation may not address aerobic instability at feedout. Likewise, an inoculant formulated to help manage yeasts and molds must be backed by research demonstrating its mode of action and repeatable field results.

Manufacturing quality matters

Manufacturing quality and formulation technology further influence how many of the CFU make it into the silo alive and active. Controlled production standards, effective drying and stabilization processes, and packaging that protects bacterial viability all determine whether the applied CFU performs as intended.

The bottom line

Ultimately, CFU count alone doesn't tell the whole story. When evaluating inoculants, producers should look beyond the numbers to ask deeper questions:

- Is this the right strain for my forage and my goals?
- Is it supported by credible, peer-reviewed research?
- Is it produced using modern technology that ensures consistency and reliability?

For more information on forage inoculants, contact your Animal Health International representative or visit <https://magniva.lallemandanimalnutrition.com/en/usa>



Is Baleage Right for You?

Smaller producers often find themselves stuck between a rock and a hard place when it comes to silage production. They are faced with two choices: make a significant investment in equipment and labor to harvest their own silage or being at the mercy of a custom chopper's schedule. Both choices can lead to dramatically higher feed costs, loss of quality due to delayed harvest or both.

Many of these same producers also produce dry baled hay. Exploring baleage production may provide the answer they have been looking for. Baleage can provide many advantages, such as:

- Weather flexibility: Less time required in the field for harvesting before rain.
- High nutritive value: Retains more leaves, protein and digestibility than dry hay.
- Portability and storage: Bales can be stored anywhere and moved easily to different pastures.
- Faster turnaround: Allows for quicker regrowth compared to waiting for hay to cure.

When making baleage, the crop is ideally harvested at 45% to 55% moisture levels, then baled and wrapped in 6 to 8 millimeters of plastic wrap within roughly 24 hours of cutting. That's the key combination; the plastic wrap helps prevent oxygen infiltration that directly leads to spoilage in baled silage.

One of the benefits of baleage for cattle is its palatability. Once ensiled and adequately fermented, it provides a good mix of protein, moisture and acidity that's highly digestible. These qualities contribute to its palatability and make baled silage a feedstock your cattle will likely prefer over dry hay.

Baled silage can be of higher quality than dry hay. When comparing the two based on relative feed quality (RFQ), the value of baleage harvested within the optimal time window is \$26.46 per ton of dry matter greater than comparable dry hay. That translates to a \$40 to \$104 in winter feed cost savings per cow when accounting for the optimal balance of crude protein and energy baleage of high-moisture hay over dry hay.

Baling and wrapping silage at higher moisture levels helps reduce storage losses by preventing oxygen infiltration that leads to spoilage and maximizing the crop's value, given the benefits of that moisture to long-term storage viability. Use of Silo Guard preservatives can aid in the prevention of oxygen infiltration while assisting speedy fermentation. Silo Guard's oxygen scavenging compounds, sugars and enzymes have been helping baleage producers for over 75 years. Its non-biological activity and ease of use make it a top choice for protecting baleage.



