Steer Responses to Alfalfa Round Bale Silage at different Moisture Contents. (C06-han142842-Poster)

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Abstract:

Alfalfa dry matter yield and forage quality decline substantially during curing and storage of hay in humid regions. Preservation as round bale silage avoids most of the negative weather effects of hay curing on alfalfa forage quality but relatively little information is available on the response of beef cattle to baled silage compared with hay. Medium (510 g/kg) and high (600 g/kg) moisture alfalfa round bale silages and hay stored under typical conditions were fed to ruminally cannulated beef steers. Neutral detergent fiber content averaged 552, 542, and 641 g/kg DM for medium moisture silage, high moisture silage, and hay, respectively. After an adaptation period, daily dry matter intakes over a 7-d measurement period averaged 7.8, 7.7, and 5.9 kg for medium moisture silage, high moisture silage, and hay, respectively. In vivo dry matter digestibility was 650, 660, and 600 g/kg DM for the same treatments, respectively. Ruminal pH was reduced by the high moisture silage compared with low moisture silage or hay but acetate:propionate ratio was unaffected. These results indicate that preservation of alfalfa as round bale silage improved ad libitum intake and digestibility by beef steers compared with the same crop preserved as hay.

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