

# Feed Wastage – Technical Principles & Practices



?

What are some key options to make more profit per cow through reducing feed wastage?

**To achieve an increase in Dairy Operating Profit (or EBIT) of \$100 per cow per year means making around 30 cents more profit per cow per day. Some options:**

- Moving from paddock feeding of a partial mixed ration to a permanent feedpad with designed troughs will typically reduce wastage from 25 to 5%, an increase in Dairy Operating Profit of \$200 per cow per year. Average capital costs for a feedpad will range from \$100 to \$250 per cow.
- For a farm feeding \$600 per cow per year in byproducts, moving from ground stored wastage of 15% to shed storage wastage of 1% will save \$84 per cow per year. This saving will be offset by storage shed capital costs which typically can be around \$150 per cow.
- Feeding round bale silage on the ground especially during wet conditions can lead up to 35% wastage. Feeding in round feeders can potentially reduce wastage to 5%. For a herd feeding 1.5 tonnes dry matter per year of silage at a cost of \$250 per tonne, this represents a potential saving of \$112 per cow per year minus the capital cost of feeders.

## Feed Losses

### Feed losses on farm occur during:

1. delivery and storage of feeds
2. mixing of diets and
3. feed-out to cows.

Of these, losses during feed-out are the most significant. They include losses due to trampling, leaf shatter, chemical and physical deterioration, faecal and urinary contamination and refusal.

Feed wastage rates vary between different feed-out methods. Low capital cost feed-out methods usually waste much more feed than high capital cost methods, and vice-versa, as shown on page 2.

Make realistic allowances for feed wastage when developing your feed budget.

If significant quantities of hay, silage or mixed rations are fed out on farm, investment in feeding infrastructure and equipment to reduce waste may be money well spent. To explore this, use the dairybiz+100 Feed Wastage partial budget tool. ■ ■



**Table 1.** Feed wastage rates with commonly used feed-out methods

**Note** - These figures assume dry conditions. They may not reflect the full range of wastage rates that might occur under wet conditions.

Feed-out method used	Wastage Rate		
	Min	Typical	Max
a) In the dairy shed at milking	0%	1%	1%
b) In grazing paddock, on pasture	5%	15%	25%
c) Using temporary feed-out area, feeding on bare ground, in ring feeders, old tractor tyres or under a fence line	5%	25%	35%
d) Using semi-permanent feed-out facility with a compacted surface and low-cost feed troughing	5%	10%	20%
e) Using permanent feedpad with a compacted surface and purpose-built feed troughing	2%	5%	10%
f) Using permanent, fully developed feedpad with concrete surfaces	1%	3%	5%