

Proper Handling of Forage Inoculants

Famo Flier

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Forage inoculants are products that contain specific strains of anaerobic bacteria that promote forage fermentation. The premise behind forage inoculants is that they help to ensure adequate amounts of the correct types of bacteria to expedite the fermentation process. Using a microbial inoculant can be a great management tool to improve forage quality. However, improper handling can negate any appreciable benefit. Keep in mind that inoculants contain living organisms which need to be kept cool and dry until use.

Helpful Tips:

- Store inoculants in a cool dry environment. Unopened packs can be refrigerated or frozen for use in the following harvest season.
- Use entire pack at one time. A partially used pack cannot be properly resealed to prevent moisture and oxygen from reaching the highly sensitive dried microbes.
- The microbes used in Famo Feed's inoculants are not affected by chlorine at normal city water supply levels (<1 ppm). However, if using chlorinated well water the chlorine levels may be at toxic levels to bacteria (>1 ppm). *Be advised that some competitor products may be more sensitive to chlorinated water.*
- Always follow mixing instructions carefully for liquid inoculants and be sure to use cool water.
- Inoculants should ideally be applied at the chopper so the microbes can begin working at the moment of harvest.
- An applicator with an insulated tank is preferred. If not insulated, use a light colored tank (preferably white). The tank should be located away from the engine and exhaust to prevent heating. Microbial viability drops off dramatically when water temperature exceeds 100°F.
- Make sure to calibrate applicators to match forage delivery rate for proper inoculant application rate. Monitor the uniformity of application rates for both dry- and liquid-applied inoculants several times daily.

Keep in mind that forage inoculants cannot overcome fermentation issues that arise due to improper harvesting and/or storage. Forage that is harvested too wet or dry, poorly packed, or left uncovered will not ferment well no matter what inoculant is used.

Inoculants can only enhance proper fermentation; they cannot replace sound forage management.

For further information on inoculants see our True-Ferm product sheet available at www.famofeeds.com or contact your Famo Feeds dealer or representative.