

# Give lower quality forages a boost this winter



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A generally favourable summer for silage making means forages on most farms are at least as good as last year. According to Trouw Nutrition, average first cut grass silage energy content is up 0.2MJ ME/kg DM, protein levels are 0.5% higher and D-value has risen nearly 1.5 percentage units.

But these averages don't tell the whole story, with a wide range in quality between individual silage clamps. In fact, D-value (as a measure of digestibility) alone ranged from a low of 58.1% to as high as 75.8%! It's a huge difference, and has a major impact on milk production and profitability. Lower energy silage with a D-value of 64% rather than 68%, for example, will cost a 30 litre/day cow consuming 40 kg freshweight (FW) of grass silage around 1 litre/day. If the D-value is closer to 60%, the loss could easily be 2 litres/day or more.

Accurate silage feed quality assessment is therefore essential, with regular testing of forage samples on-farm using the NIR4 Farm portable analyser a good first step. Because NIR4 Farm produces results in just five minutes, it quickly highlights any poor quality silage, so action can be taken to address the lower energy supply.

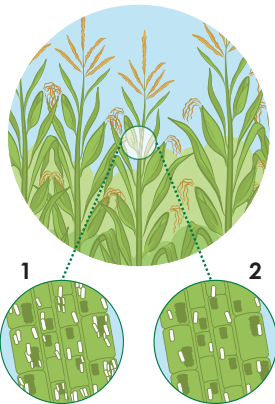
One solution to that challenge is the new forage pre-treatment VistaPre-T from AB Vista, which can increase the digestibility of the forage by up to 13 percentage units, depending on initial silage quality. In energy terms, that's equivalent to feeding a 200 cow herd an extra 3-9 t FW of wheat per month! Added to the TMR as a liquid during mixing, VistaPre-T attacks the surface of fibre in the ration to create pits that speed up colonisation by rumen microbes, thereby improving forage digestibility. Above 68% D-value there's little further gain, so it also helps level out typical variations in feed quality within a clamp. With trials confirming potential yield responses of up to 2 litres/cow/day, Vista Pre-T is a good option for anyone with below average forage this winter.

**For more information on the NIR4 Farm portable spectrometer phone +44 (0)28 94 473 478.**



[www.abvista.com](http://www.abvista.com)

### How does VistaPre-T work?



Bacteria



Pits

1. Breaks down forage roughening up the surface of the fibre causing pits to form.
2. These pits enable the easy attachment and colonisation of anaerobic bacteria, reducing the lag time to digestion.