Multi-cut grass silage 10-point checklist

1. Plan ahead
   - Consult your contractor or review your own equipment
   - Consider clamp capacity and/or bale storage area
   - Set targets for timing, tonnage and quality
   - Test soils and slurry over the winter period

2. Reseed to maintain leys fit for purpose
   - Maintain high sown species content and ground cover
   - Grow mixtures with high yielding varieties, good spring growth and high ME yield/ha
   - Only select varieties from Recommended Grass & Clover Lists (RGCL)

3. Over-winter swards with optimum cover
   - Remove autumn grazing stock by end of December with sward height at 4-5cm
   - Walk silage fields to check drainage, mole damage and weed content
   - Apply slurry into the soil, not onto the sward, to a maximum of 25,000l/ha

4. Ensure correct crop nutrition
   - Avoid heavy slurry applications within 10 weeks of cutting
   - Apply any slurry into the soil immediately fields are cleared
   - Apply bagged fertiliser as recommended by an agronomist but not exceeding 2 units/acre for each growing day between cuts

5. Cut early and frequently
   - Take first cuts late April - early May (depending on season and location) to maximise ME yield
   - Take subsequent cuts at intervals of 4 to 5 weeks to maintain quality
   - Mow no lower than 6.5 cm to ensure rapid regrowth

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Wilt quickly for optimum dry matter
- Cut early in the day with a mower with an effective integral conditioner
- Ted out the crop within two hours to maximise speed of drying
- Aim to pick up the same day for a target 28 - 32% DM silage

Apply a proven silage additive to improve fermentation
- Because protein and nitrates may be higher – which buffer the fermentation
- Select an additive containing the most efficient fermentation bacteria

Chop long to maintain structural fibre
- Consider a chop length of 5cm or longer for good clamp management
- The typical chop length of a forage wagon can work well with multi-cut

Ensile for the best possible fermentation
- Apply best practice approach when clamping or baling
- Roll or compact to squeeze out air
- Seal effectively to maintain airtight conditions
- Ensile in layers to maximise compaction

Feed fibre as needed to balance rations
- Ensure sufficient ‘scratch factor’ for optimum rumen function
- Consult your nutritionist to maximise value of higher energy grass silage

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