

Farmers' verdict: Silage additives

In the quest for better forage preservation, silage additives can help preserve nutrients during fermentation and reduce spoilage. But which products should farmers trust? British Dairying and Kingshay unveil the results from the latest Tried and Tested report.

Choosing products you can genuinely trust is hard. That's why British Dairying and Kingshay joined forces to offer honest, experience-based feedback from other farmers who have already tried them in a real-world setting. Our latest survey focuses on silage additives, an area that directly affects forage quality, feed value and ultimately profitability.

For many farms, forage remains the single largest home-produced feed resource, so any improvement in clamp stability or feed-out performance can make a meaningful difference to margins. "While some losses are unavoidable, many can be reduced with good management," says Sarah Bolt at Kingshay.



Silage additives can be useful to preserve nutrients during fermentation

In our latest survey, two thirds of respondents ran grazing-focused systems. The most common were all-year-round calving herds with a grazing emphasis, and autumn or split block-calving systems, each representing 29% of respondents. Herd size ranged dramatically, from 65 to 1,400 cows, with the average herd milking 333 cows. Yields also varied widely, from 4,000 to 13,000 litres/cow annually, averaging 8,587 litres. This breadth of participants ensures the results reflect a wide variety of practical situations, farming styles, ground conditions and forage expectations.

The survey gathered detailed information about firstcut silage in 2025. Ley age varied, with 23% of fields being over five years old and 20% younger than three, while most (57%) fell between three and five years. Altogether, respondents harvested 3,706ha for first cut, with individual farm areas ranging from 30 to 570ha, averaging 106ha.

Clover was present in most swards; 51% reported medium to high clover content, while 17% had none.

Herbal leys were far less common, with nearly two thirds of farmers cutting no diverse swards at all, although around a third did include some herbal leys in their first cut. Even then, most took less than 25% of their silage from these diverse mixes. "As mixed-species swards continue to gain interest in the industry, these results offer a timely snapshot of where adoption currently stands," says Sarah.

First cuts

Cutting dates stretched from April 1 to June 5, with a noticeable concentration early in the season, as would be expected. By the end of April, 43% of farmers had already taken their first cut, and by mid-May, 86% had completed it.

Encouragingly, 94% sent samples of their silage for laboratory analysis, whether directly or via their

nutritionist, and 86% felt the feeding quality of their silage matched or exceeded what the analysis had suggested. Fermentation quality was also highly rated, with 91% describing it as good or very good. Feed value earned similarly positive ratings, with 89% saying it was good or very good, and 83% reporting good or very good animal performance from their first cut.

Silage additive use was widespread - 71% of respondents applied an additive to their first cut, which accounted for 2,348ha; 63% of the total area harvested. Nearly all followed the manufacturer's recommended application rate. Only two farmers deviated; one due to miscalculation, using 92% of the recommended rate, and one who deliberately applied two thirds of the advised amount.

All or nothing?

"This raises an important question for the industry - whether underdosing risks losing the benefits entirely," says Sarah. "If so, is using the correct rate or not using an additive at all a better strategy? It also highlights the importance of accurate calibration and yield estimation; small misjudgements can have effects beyond just cost saving."

When farmers were asked why they chose a particular additive, the most common reason, selected by 43%, was to improve fermentation. A further 37% aimed to increase feed value, and 29% were motivated by the desire for better animal performance. Remarkably, another 29% admitted they simply continued using a product they had always used, a reminder that habit still plays a

significant role in decision-making on many farms. "Conversations on-farm suggest that trust and familiarity are powerful influences, especially when comparing products that appear similar on paper."

Products were sourced from eight manufacturers, with a further supplier not easily identifiable from the data. In total, 12 different products were reviewed, including 11 inoculants and one preservative. Of the inoculants, six contained enzymes, and over half (55%) were combined homofermentative and heterofermentative bacteria, while 36% were homofermentative, with the other manufacturers not stating the bacteria in their product.

Among all products reviewed, Volac additives dominated the marketplace, used by 40% of respondents. Three Volac products were included in the survey, with Ecosyl 100 the most frequently reviewed, followed by Genus Powerstart and AgriKing's SiloKing and Safesil Challenge. All remaining products only received a single review so were not included in the rankings.

Costs varied from £0.76 to £2.00/t treated, averaging £1.26. Overall

SILAGE ADDITIVES TRIED & TESTED (SILAGE SEASON 2025)

The table below summarises the scores from the Silage Additives Survey. The table shows the average of scores given by respondents. The results are listed in alphabetical order.

Products reviewed	£	Product details	Your opinion: 1-poor to 5-very good	Rating 1-low to 5-high
Agri-King Silo-King	2	£1.10 I Ho N	4.50 4.00 4.50 4.50 5.00 5.00 4.50	5.00 37.00
Bonsilage	1	£1.40 I Ho N	4.00 4.00 4.00 4.00 4.00 5.00 5.00	5.00 35.00
Genus Powerstart	3	£0.88 I Ho N	3.67 3.67 3.67 3.67 3.67 4.00 3.33	3.67 29.33
Kelvin Cave Activator +	1	£1.20 I Ho N	3.00 1.00 1.00 1.00 5.00 5.00 1.00	1.00 18.00
Lallemand Classic	1	£1.00 I Ho/He Y	5.00 4.00 4.00 4.00 3.00 5.00 5.00	5.00 35.00
Lallemand Magniva	1	£1.25 I Ho/He Y	3.00 4.00 3.00 3.00 3.00 3.00 3.00	3.00 25.00
Lallemand Magniva PG Dry	1	£1.40 I Ho/He Y	4.00 4.00 4.00 4.00 5.00 5.00 4.00	4.00 34.00
Lallemand Magniva PG Wet	1	£1.15 I Ho/He Y	4.00 4.00 4.00 4.00 3.00 5.00 3.00	4.00 31.00
Microferm (product unknown)	1	£0.76	5.00 5.00 5.00 5.00 5.00 5.00 5.00	5.00 40.00
Safesil - Challenge	2	£1.50 P - -	3.00 4.00 3.50 4.00 4.00 4.00 4.00	4.00 30.50
Volac - Advance	1	£1.75 I Ho/He Y	4.00 3.00 4.00 4.00 4.00 4.00 4.00	4.00 30.00
Volac - EcoCool	1	I Ho/He N	4.00 3.00 4.00 3.00 5.00 5.00 4.00	4.00 32.00
Volac - Ecosyl 100	8	£1.46 I Ho N	4.88 4.38 4.25 3.88 4.75 4.88 4.13	4.63 35.75

Costs varied from £0.76 to £2.00/t treated, averaging £1.26

value for money scored 3.92 out of five. Most importantly, 84% of farmers said they would use the same additive again, while 8% were undecided, and another 8% would not repeat their purchase. Repeat intention is often one of the clearest indicators of farmer confidence, suggesting that the majority felt their

chosen additive had justified its place in the system. However, most farmers based their decisions on the product's availability and the ease with which it could be purchased.

"Understanding the question farmers most often ask us is: 'Which product is best?' While this survey offers useful insight, the limited

data means it is not yet possible to deliver the level of robust comparison farmers want," notes Sarah. "To do that, we need more responses, more opinions, and more real-world experiences of the products farmers are using every day. In many ways, the success of these reports depends on the willingness of farmers to share their experiences openly, helping others make informed decisions and avoid costly mistakes."

Win-win with a quick survey

That is why we encourage you to take part in our future Tried and Tested surveys. They take around 12 minutes to complete, and every submission helps to build an independent, farmer-led resource that benefits everyone. Participants are also entered into a prize draw for a £100 Amazon gift voucher, which this month was won by Karen Kendall from Bodmin, Cornwall - congratulations.

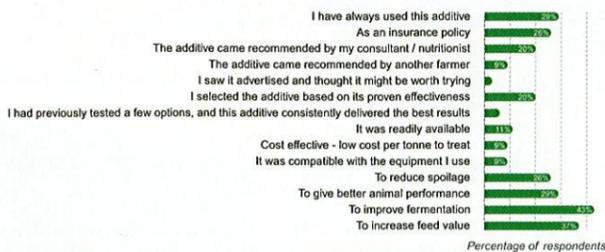
The next survey will focus on cow brushes; both static and motorised, and we would greatly value your input. These reports grow stronger with every response, and your insight could help another farmer choose the right product for their cows and their system.

"Trust and familiarity are powerful influences."

"Silage additives are widely used to limit these issues by supporting fermentation and reducing spoilage. Their value tends to be greatest when conditions are challenging, dry matter is high, or the risk of aerobic instability increases."

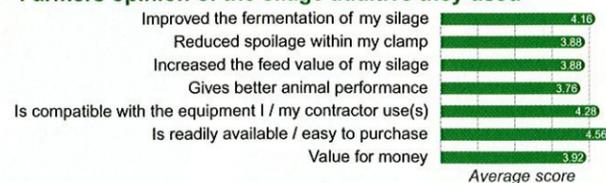
In those situations, an additive can help protect the feed value. But with over 24 suppliers offering a bewildering range of products, choosing the right one for a particular farm and season can be a minefield, especially when the science behind different bacterial strains and enzyme blends is not always easy to compare.

Farmers decisions to select the specific additive they used



Most farmers based their decisions on ease of purchase and availability

Farmers opinion of the silage additive they used



Improving fermentation was the most common reason for using an additive



Northern England & Scotland
Hamish Watson
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Southern England & Wales
Lewis Browning
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Vertical Auger Feeders

Chop straw, silage & beet in minutes
Mix all ingredients into a complete ration
7m³ to 35m³



Mixmax Paddle Feeders

Unique Feed-Flo paddle mixing system
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10m³ to 24m³