

If you haven't bought different feed ingredients before, it can be a daunting task. Where do you find them? How do you work out a good deal when you see one? What do you do with them once the truck arrives?

You will be pleased to know that the basics are still the same as buying fodder and grain/concentrates:

- Know what's in the feed before you buy it. Get a feed test.
- Store it in a way that you minimise spoilage and wastage
- **Make sure the ingredients fit your Flexible Feeding System**
- Be aware of any potential hazards with certain types of feeds

Buy wisely

Figuring out what feeds to buy is difficult if you compare apples to oranges. Get a feed test and use the figures to compare the costs based on dry matter, energy and protein.

	How to calculate	Example	Remember this
Dry matter	Cents per kg DM = $\frac{\text{Price (\$) per tonne of fresh feed} \times 10}{\text{DM percentage}}$	Citrus \$41/t delivered, 18% DM: $\$41 \times 10 = 22.7\text{¢ per kg DM}$ 18	Feed values can change between loads. Get a feed test on a representative sample. Wet feeds can 'shrink' by up to 25% after delivery.
Energy	Cents per MJ ME = $\frac{\text{Price ¢ per kg DM}}{\text{MJ ME per kg DM}}$	PKE 38¢ per kg DM, 11.5 MJ ME: $\frac{38}{11.5} = 3.3\text{¢/MJ ME}$ 11.5	Think about securing a proportion of your required tonnage of energy-dense concentrates on contract so there are no surprises.
Protein	Cents per kg CP = $\frac{\text{Price ¢ per kg DM} \times 100}{\% \text{ CP}}$	Canola meal 46¢ per kg DM, 42% CP: $\frac{46 \times 100}{42} = 109\text{¢/kg CP}$ 42	With little pasture, you will have little protein to work with. Make sure you have secured protein sources.
Fibre	Not often calculated per kg. Use a blend of fibre sources, including at least one with a high 'effective' fibre value to ensure cows' long fibre requirements can be met (Refer to feed.FIBRE.future fact sheets A, C and E)		

DM = dry matter; MJ ME = megajoules of metabolisable energy; CP = crude protein.

Feed supplies

Focus on securing your fodder requirements first, as fibre is essential in the diets of ruminants such as cattle. Then you can think about contracting energy-dense concentrates and protein sources to ensure a continuous supply.

Remember that co-products such as brewers grains are now commonly used by dairy farmers. Supply of co-products may be tied up by long term clients so it will take a bit of research to source some ingredients.

Secure your fodder requirements first.



Are you adequately insured?
 As the old saying goes, insure anything you can't afford to lose. Review your insurance cover for hay and other feeds.

Feed storage options

Don't wait until the truck arrives before you work out where to store feed ingredients. There are inexpensive feed storage facilities that work well in the short term but they usually involve higher feed spoilage and wastage costs. If your Flexible Feeding System is looking longer term, concrete is a must.

Other storage factors to consider are

- Will you purchase dry meals? These need to be kept dry and are subject to wind loss.
- Will you purchase wet protein sources? Flies might be a problem.
- Do you know about mycotoxins (fungal toxins) that can be found in some feed ingredients? Chat with an adviser to reduce the risk.

Don't forget about your existing hay and silage supplies. They are too valuable to waste through poor storage.

- Do you have good year round delivery access?
- Where are the powerlines? Is it a safe delivery area?
- Feed contamination with stones and dirt can be a problem if you don't have a concrete base.

Wasted feed could be more expensive than a bit of concrete.

What's possible?

Here are some example storage facilities for wet and dry co-products. What suits your Flexible Feed System?



Open air piled storage



Sleeper wall bunker



Straw bunker



Roll-over tarp



Concrete block bunkers



Concrete bunkers



Bunker with pitched sliding roof



Bunker with flat sliding roof



Bunker with fixed roof

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