

Feeding Potatoes To Livestock

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Introduction

Potatoes are a satisfactory feed for livestock. They are relished by all forms of livestock. The reason more potatoes are not fed to livestock is because other feeds are cheaper.

1. What is the feed value of potatoes?

It takes about 400 to 500 pounds of potatoes to supply as much feed value as there is in 100 pounds of grain. This is the approximate value of potatoes as a substitute for grain in feeding livestock. They have less feed value than good corn silage, and are less palatable. They contain 1.3 percent protein (6 percent on a dry matter basis). They are low in vitamins A and D.

2. Do potatoes have other values for livestock?

Yes. They are laxative in nature, and when fed to cows not having access to silage, beet pulp, or molasses, they are good for the digestion. They are palatable, frequently improving the appetite for other kinds of feed. They have a high moisture content – 79 percent – which increases the water intake of the animal if running water is not available or silage not being fed. This is especially important to dairy cows in milk production.

3. How many may be fed daily?

Twenty-five to forty pounds per 1000 pounds of live weight is the usual recommendation. Animals should be accustomed to potatoes gradually. Large cows may consume more than 40 pounds daily. Horses may be fed 15 to 20 pounds daily. Swine may be fed four pounds of cooked potatoes for each pound of concentrate. Poultry may be fed equal weights of cooked potatoes with grain. Potatoes may be substituted for corn silage in fattening beef cattle.

4. How should they be fed?

For best results, potatoes should be chopped or sliced. This increases the palatability and

reduces the chances of choking. A square-pointed shovel is satisfactory for chopping. They should be fed raw to all forms of livestock except swine and poultry for which the need to be cooked.

5. When should they be fed?

After milking. Why? Because milk and cream may become off flavor if exposed to an atmosphere heavy with potato odor. Potatoes do not affect the flavor of milk as it comes from the cow.

6. Potato silage – how is it made?

Good silage may be made by combining 100 pounds of potatoes and 25 pounds of hay or dry corn fodder. These materials should be combined by running them through a silage cutter. The resulting silage is comparable to corn silage. Dairy cows should be limited to 40 pounds daily per 1000 pounds live weight. The silo should be well reinforced to stand the pressure of the heavy material, or it should have drains to allow the escape of surplus juice. Chopped raw potatoes alone do not make good silage.

7. Any danger in feeding potatoes?

Yes, in certain instances. Too many sunburned potatoes should not be fed at once. There is a danger in feeding any considerable amount of potato sprouts. Over feeding may cause serious scours. Occasionally, an animal may get choked.

8. How about potato by-products?

Dried potato starch waste, when composing about 20 percent of the grain ration, has been a feeding value of about 90 percent of that of corn. It is reasonably palatable. Pressed potato starch waste also is a good feed for livestock. Due to its water content of about 80 percent, it has a limited radius in the distance it can be moved economically.