

DAIRY FARMER

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Eye on the prize

Young Canterbury farmer wins Farm Manager of the Year

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Rolling up the sleeves

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- Focus on calving



The EcoSmart Silage Cover is made from a flexible inert rubber membrane and sits snugly on the silage. The tight seal accelerates fermentation, reduces spoilage, improves quality and reduces secondary fermentation.



Got it covered

By Samantha Tennent

A silage storage solution new to New Zealand is living up to the reputation it has earned in Europe.

A Taranaki farmer fed up with the amount of spoilage in his maize silage bunker, with its clay composition, knew he had to do something to remedy the situation.

Erwin Heblers, who milks 400 cows on his farm just south of Hāwera, was more than frustrated by the cost and effort resulting from spoilage. Wastage was not only occurring at the top but also along the sides. Eager to identify an effective remedy for covering the stack, he stumbled upon GeoSmart, which appeared to be like the liner utilized in his effluent pond.

"That liner is 14 years old, and it still looks in great condition," Heblers says.

"So when I found the EcoSmart Silage Cover my gut told me it was worth a try."

It is a new product to New Zealand but has been used in Europe and France for several years. Heblers has been using the cover for 18 months and is really pleased as it has

significantly reduced wastage from spoilage and met his wishlist.

"I was looking at other covers that a few farmers seemed to be using, but they still had two parts with a film and the cover over top.

"I just wanted something that was low maintenance, only had one layer to deal with and would be durable to last, but mostly I wanted to stop wasting time mucking around

scraping off more silage than we needed because of spoilage."

The GeoSmart cover goes on easily and they only need to put tyres on the edges and overlap. When it comes time to feed out, Heblers starts folding it back and using the silage straight away.

The cover came with a 10-year guarantee and Heblers expects to get a lot more out of it, especially seeing the

performance of his pond liner. He has also noted he is more conscientious about his silage management, utilising bait stations more to keep the rats under control.

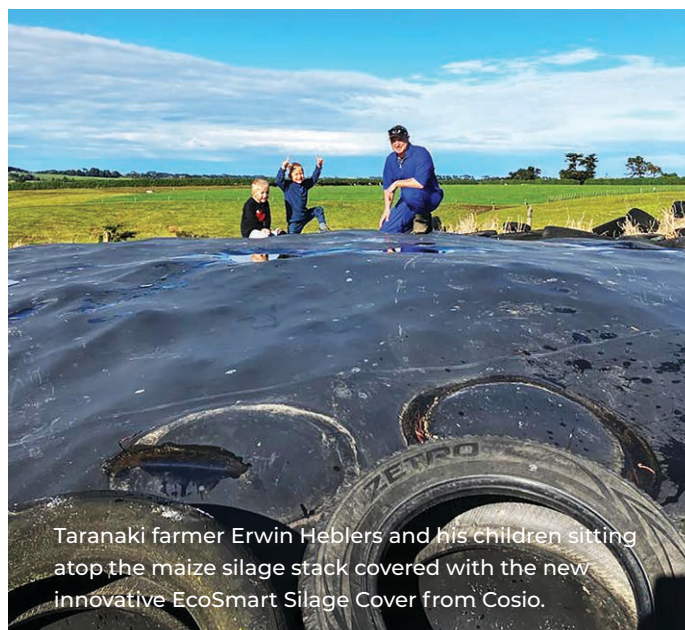
"I used to have a lot of rat holes eaten around the edge of the old covers, I was a bit blasé about it all, thinking I would just put another one on next year, but now I put more effort in, especially because it costs more to make or even buy."

The farm produces about 75t of maize silage. It is just Heblers and another team member on the farm, so he likes to utilise simple, reliable tools to get jobs done. And the biggest benefit he can see is the peace of mind that the cows are not being fed spoiled maize.

He used to use a shovel to pick the bad bits out before the load went into the wagon.

"It just makes feeding out that bit easier, saving the extra hassle."

The material is a flexible inert rubber membrane, comparable to a tractor



Taranaki farmer Erwin Heblers and his children sitting atop the maize silage stack covered with the new innovative EcoSmart Silage Cover from Cosio.

“I just wanted something that was low maintenance and would be durable to last, but mostly I wanted to stop wasting time mucking around scraping off more silage than we needed because of spoilage.”

Erwin Heblers



About 75t of maize silage is made each year on the farm but a lot was being spoilt in the bunker. With the Ecosmart silage cover, spoilage has been greatly reduced.

tube, and sits snugly on the silage and conforms well as the silage settles over time. That tight seal accelerates fermentation, reduces spoilage, improves quality and reduces secondary fermentation.

And being durable, it means people can walk on it easily without the risk of slipping or damaging the cover. It is also resistant to pūkeko and rat

damage and easy to repair if any damage does occur.

Europe has been using the GeoSmart covers for more than 10 years, largely due to its reusable nature. One of the biggest advantages is the significant time and labour saving of adding and removing tyres.

“Single-use plastics are under scrutiny and many companies are looking for alternative, sustainable options,” says Vaughan

Podbielski from Cosio Industries, which has been bringing GeoSmart to NZ.

“By using GeoSmart instead of normal plastic, the average farm can prevent at least 5000kg from being produced.

“And the benefits from

reduced labour and saving time doing away with lots of tyres, decreased spoilage and no annual silage recycling costs make GeoSmart an exciting new offering to the NZ market to help reduce waste.”



Erwin Heblers used to use a shovel to pick the bad bits out of the silage before the load went into the wagon. He now has peace of mind his cows are not eating spoiled silage.

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