

# Browse silage: winterfood in the zoo

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Many zoo animals such as the bongo, giraffe, black rhino or gorilla are partly or even entirely dependent on leaves, twigs and bark of bushes and trees (browse). Insufficient browse intake is known to lead to **health problems** such as rumen acidosis, laminitis and low reproductive success. Of equal importance however, is the impairment of natural behaviour and a **decline in mental health** when these animals are offered inadequate daily amounts of browse.

Lots of zoos in Europe are facing wintertime and are therefore **challenged to provide browse for a significant period of the year**. Ensiling browse, and storing it until winter, has proven to be a possible solution.

However, making **browse silage** requires practical skills and quality assessment of the end product.



Although some zoos are already experienced in ensiling browse, variation in the applied methods (e.g. additives) is high and **uniform protocols are lacking**. This project aims at promoting “winter-browse” in European zoos by providing ensiling protocols for commonly used browse. Chemical evaluation of the ensiling process, a thorough nutrient analyses and preference tests will be covered during this **two-year project** budgeted for **193 020 €**.