

## REDUCE HAY FEEDING LOSSES

Hay is expensive and many long hours go into harvesting, storing, and feeding it. Don't waste up to a third of it by using poor feeding practices.

Believe it or not, cattle trample, over consume, foul, and use for bedding 25 to 45 percent of your hay when it is fed with no restrictions. No matter how expensive or cheap your hay might be, extra control in feeding can pay off big time.

For starters, never provide more than one day's supply at a time. Research has shown that when cows are fed a four-day supply, they will overeat and waste 20 to 30 percent more hay than when they are fed one day at a time. This adds up to \$25 to \$50 more per cow over a four month feeding period. Best of all is to feed only what the livestock will clean up in one meal so nothing is left over to be wasted. Be sure to provide sufficient space, though, for all animals to eat at once so boss cows don't stop timid cows from getting their fair share.

Another thing you can do is restrict access to the hay. Use bale racks or rings to keep animals off the hay. Especially useful are racks with barriers around the bottom that prevent livestock from pulling hay loose with their feet and dragging it out to be stepped on. If you unroll bales or grind and feed on the ground, position an electric fence alongside or above the hay to keep cows from trampling or bedding down on the hay.

As always, feed a balanced ration that provides sufficient energy and protein, but not too much. Animals that eat more protein than they need will simply excrete it as extra nitrogen in their urine. This is just as wasteful as directly trampling it into the ground.

Hay is expensive. Save money by feeding it wisely.

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