

## Twine Ain't Feed

Is twine good feed? Obviously not. During most years when winter comes, so does snow, and snow often leads to feeding hay, and feeding hay means work. To lighten the work load feeding hay, we often take short cuts and leave some twine or net wrap on the bales. And whether we want them to or not, animals fed that hay often eat at least some of that twine.

What happens to twine that's eaten? Well, some of it passes completely through the digestive tract and ends up in manure. But a large amount of it can end up as a tangled up ball that gets stuck in the rumen, especially the plastic twine.

Dr. Dee Griffin, veterinarian in Clay Center at the Great Plains Veterinary Educational Center, recently discovered a large twine mass in a feedlot heifer. He asked other veterinarians how frequently they find twine in the rumen of dead cattle. Their response suggested that it is quite common but it usually isn't a serious problem. However, in large amounts the twine could limit intake by occupying space in the rumen and it might aggravate other illnesses or health conditions and on occasion causes obstruction so severe as to cause death.

So what should you do? First, remember that it doesn't appear to be a health concern very often. Still, it might be wise to remove as much twine, especially plastic twine, as can be removed easily from bales before feeding. Twine in ground hay may be less of a problem since more of it is likely to pass completely through the animal.

Think about how shortcuts and work-reducing actions you take this winter might affect your animals. Then act accordingly.

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