

SAVE HAY BY REDUCING FEEDING WASTE

Cattle can waste as much as 45 percent of their hay when it is fed without restrictions. How can you reduce these losses to minimize costs and maintain an adequate hay supply?

Your first step should be to limit how much hay is available. Research shows that cattle fed hay with free access every four days needed about 25% more hay than cattle fed daily. Daily feeding reduces the amount of hay refused, trampled, fouled, over-consumed, or used for bedding.

A second step is to restrict access to the hay by using hay racks, bale rings, electric fences, feed bunks, or anything else that will keep animals off the hay. It's especially important to limit the amount of hay accessible to trampling. So use racks or bale rings with solid barriers at the bottom to prevent livestock from pulling hay loose and then dragging it out to be stepped on.

If you feed hay on the ground, either as loose hay, unrolled round bales, or as ground hay, it is especially important to follow these guidelines. Limit the hay fed to an amount animals will clean up in a single meal. Anything left over will be stepped on, fouled, or used for bedding instead of as feed. And if you can – use an electric wire or other barrier to restrict access to only one side of the feed on the ground. But also be sure to distribute that hay enough so all cows have access to it at the same time.

With a little foresight and careful management, you can stretch your hay further.

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