

October 2016

PLAN ACCESS TO WINTER HAY

As I think back about some of the long, cold, and snowy periods we all have experienced in years past, I begin to realize how lucky we have been the past few winters. Sure, we've had some cold and snowy weather. But it rarely lasted terribly long.

But what if it does last a long time this winter? Will you be ready? Will you have adequate feed supplies for your livestock on hand? Will you have easy access to all your hay supplies during a blizzard? And will you be able to get it to your animals?

While driving across the state, I see many hay stacks and round bales stored next to trees or in low spots or along fence lines that might get drifted in during a blizzard. In some cases, the access road to this hay might get drifted in. And in a lot of sites, when the snow eventually melts during winter or next spring, it might be too muddy to get to the hay.

I also wonder how well the hay is organized. Is good hay separated from poor hay? Has it even been tested so you know what hay should be fed to cows needing only a maintenance diet and what hay should be saved for animals needing extra protein and energy. And then, can you get to either one whenever you want? Also, has the hay been tested for nitrates? Nitrate poisoning occurs most frequently when high nitrate hay is fed to hungry animals right after a snow storm.

Don't neglect planning for bad weather in placement of your hay yards. Then if storms do occur, you'll be ready.

Dr. Bruce Anderson, Extension Forage Specialist
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
314 Keim Hall—East Campus
Lincoln NE 68583-0915
402-4742-2577
banderson1@unl.edu



University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension educational programs abide with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.. Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of