

## PROPER HAY STORAGE

Did you make any good quality hay yet? To keep it valuable and in good shape, proper storage is needed.

I've said it before and I'll say it again – your hay is only as good as it is the day you feed it or sell it. No matter how good your hay is today, between now and feeding time, every windstorm, every rain is going to steal nutrients from every exposed bale and stack.

So what are you going to do about it? Hopefully, one of the things you do is store that hay, especially your best hay, in a location and in a manner that will minimize nutrient losses caused by weathering.

Weathering tends to lower the yield and nutrients available from your hay by about one percent for each month of exposed storage. High value, high quality hay that will be sold or fed to high value animals like dairy cows and horses should be stored under cover. A hay shed, a partially used machine shed, or any other shelter with a roof will be better than exposing your hay to what Mother Nature dishes out this summer. Plastic wraps can be very effective, too, when good quality plastic is wrapped around bales enough times.

Next best may be tarps, especially heavy-duty ones that can be tied down without tearing in the wind. Plastic also works, but it takes special care and a lot of luck to fasten down plastic well enough so it doesn't get ripped during storms.

If uncovered storage is your only option, place bales and stacks on an elevated site with good drainage so moisture doesn't soak up from the bottom. Don't stack round bales or line them up with the twine sides touching – rain will collect where they touch and soak into the bale. Also, allow space for air to circulate and dry hay after rain.

Good hay can stay that way. But it's up to you to make it so.

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