

IN THE FIELD

Upcoming Events

Flood Recovery for Cropland Webinar

September 12
9:30 a.m.
Courthouse Annex
Center, Nebraska

September 12
9:30 a.m.
Extension Office
Hartington, Nebraska

Make the Most of Expensive Hay

Most hay will be worth over one hundred dollars per ton this year. Let's identify what you need to know to get by with using as little as possible.

Minimizing the amount of hay you feed over winter can be wise when hay is as expensive as it is this year. You don't want to be wasteful. But you shouldn't short your cows just to save a few dollars, either.

The two most important bits of information you need are what does my cow need and what can my different feedstuffs provide. A dry beef cow fed winter range, corn stalks, or even straw rarely needs more than one pound of extra protein per day. Just six or seven pounds of average alfalfa hay will provide this protein; feeding any more probably is wasting extra protein.

Once she calves, or if you have grass hay instead of alfalfa, the feeding system will be drastically different because she needs more nutrients and grass hay usually has less protein than alfalfa.

With hay as expensive as it is, forage testing is just common sense. It is the only way – let me repeat – the only way you will know for sure how much protein, energy, and other nutrients your hay can provide. One more healthy calf, one more bred cow, one bale of saved hay will more than make up for the cost of testing your forages. One final thing – store and feed your hay to reduce weather losses and waste. Outdoor stored hay in Nebraska loses about one percent of its nutrients every month when stored properly; those losses can more than double if hay is stored carelessly. Feeding waste can be similar. Don't give animals free access to your precious hay. Control the amount and location of the hay so little of it gets stomped into the ground. Remember – expensive hay deserves extra management.



Source: Bruce Anderson, UNL Forage Specialist

Prepare Bins & Equipment for Harvest

Grain harvested in Nebraska is essentially insect-free, but can become infested by storage insects from contaminated equipment such as combines and grain augers.

Here are some tips to clean and prepare bins and equipment before this year's harvest:

Store sound, clean, dry grain. Screen out broken grains, trash and fines to increase the quality of the final storage product.

Clean all equipment. Stored grain insects can invade new grain from infested harvesting and handling equipment. Carefully remove all traces of old grain from combines, truck beds, grain carts, augers and other equipment used for harvesting, transporting, and handling grain.

Clean grain bins thoroughly with a simple broom and a vacuum cleaner. If you can tell what was stored or handled last season by looking at equipment, it's not clean enough to prevent contamination of the new crop.

After empty bins have been thoroughly cleaned, a residual treatment such as silicon dioxide or butylcarbityl and pyrethrins may be applied to bin surfaces to protect incoming grain from infestation. Follow label instructions carefully. Fumigants such as chloropicrin, magnesium phosphide and methyl bromide may be used, but they are dangerous, restricted-use pesticides. Fumigation is best handled by commercial pesticide applicators who have been trained and certified.

Clear clutter and remove tall grass and weeds around grain bins to ensure the area is less attractive to insects and rodents. Clean up any spilled grain several weeks before harvest. Leave a 4-foot wide strip of bare gravel around the perimeter of storage bins.

Besides clean up, it is important to maintain and repair bins, equipment and landscape around the bins. Proper system maintenance before harvest can prevent costly downtime.

Make sure that grain bins are rodent-proofed by plugging holes, sealing bins, caulking and making general repairs. If rats have tunneled under foundations, use baits or traps to catch and eliminate them.

Inspect wiring for fans and other electrical components in the bins for corrosion and cracked, frayed or broken insulation. Run wiring through waterproof, dust-tight conduit. Avoid kinking the conduit and make sure all connections are secure.

Check fans, heaters, transitions and ducts for corrosion and other damage. Remove any accumulated dust and dirt that may reduce operating efficiency.

Mice often nest in control boxes and they can strip insulation from wires for nest material. Their urine can also corrode electrical components. If rodent damage is found, clean and repair or replace damaged wiring, relays and other electrical equipment. Then, seal over knock-outs and other openings that may permit rodent entry.

Ensure travel lanes have enough rock or gravel to bear the weight of heavy trucks and grain carts.

After cleaning and repairing bins and equipment, it is important to maintain the harvested grain to prevent insect infestations.

If buying old crop grain for storage with newly harvested grain, watch for insects in the incoming grain. If infested grain is purchased for livestock feed, store it away from the new crop and feed it as soon as possible.

Stored grain insects cannot live on extremely dry grain (grain moisture at less than 10 percent), while high grain moisture (more than 14 percent) favors insect reproduction. Insects are not very active below 50 degrees Fahrenheit, so manage the aeration system going to manipulate temperature and moisture.

Prevent condensation of moisture in the grain mass by slowly cooling the grain mass and gradually reducing the temperature gradient between the grain mass temperature and the outside (ambient) temperature.

Source: Tom Dorn, UNL Extension Educator