

April 5, 2019

WRAPPING HAY CAN BEAT WET WEATHER

One thing about our weather we can have very wet conditions and then the switch turns off and too dry. Bruce Anderson, forage specialist at UNL, reminded us this week that rain often damages high quality hay just before it's ready to bale. Some years this happens more so than others. There is a new baling method technique being used that may help solve that problem.

Even when you study weather reports carefully and do your best to cut when good drying weather is expected, just before hay is ready to bale, it can get damaged by rain. So what are the options when dark clouds are on the horizon and your hay still is a little too wet to bale?

Option 1: Go ahead and bale the tough hay and hope. Or hope that it doesn't spoil, or even worse, get hot and burn. Option 2: Wait out the storm and cross your fingers that you get good moisture for your row crops but it skips over the hay fields.

There is another option or Option 3: Maybe you bale it tough, then wrap it with stretch wrap plastic to keep water and air out while keeping nutrients in. I call this the silage bale technique. Research studies have shown excellent success wrapping bales containing twenty-five to forty percent moisture. After a full year in storage, the hay came out of the wrapping in great shape, with very little storage loss, a nice silage-like odor, and well-preserved nutrients.

Wrapping tough hay reduces weather risk because wrapping often occurs at least a day sooner than normal baling. Both yield and forage quality can be higher because fewer leaves are lost than with dry hay, however it does take a lot of plastic. Six or seven layers of plastic are needed to maintain feed quality. If you don't use enough plastic or fail to repair any holes, this kind of hay can spoil very fast.

Wrapping slightly tough hay in plastic can improve your forage quality and reduce weather losses. If rain damage often plagues your hay making, it might be worth looking into.

Farm Safety Tips: During the spring planting season, its human nature for farmers to rush to get into the fields and then tend to work extremely long hours to fit into a planting window of time. This can cause fatigue and when you are fatigued often comes poor decisions about your own safety.

Don't forget, when working long hours, you need to take breaks so you can reenergize. Always tell a family member where you are at and have a cell phone handy at all times. Properly maintain equipment and make sure signal lights are working. SMV signs and reflective tape should be cleaned for highest visibility.

Farmers and drivers on highways and rural roads will need to adjust to having large, slow-moving agricultural equipment on the road. Farmers should avoid driving machinery on roads at dawn and dusk. Most accidents happen during those times -- peak time for drivers heading to and from work on their commute. The public should always remember to decrease your speed and approach farm equipment with care.



Farming is the most dangerous occupation in the U.S. Keep that in mind always with your family members and have a safe planting and spraying season!

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