

Weekly Article

6-21-2021

Steps to Take For Successful Hay Storage

Hello, my Name is Richard Purdin with OSU Extension, Ag and Natural Resource Educator and Community Development Educator for Adams County. I hope to better inform local producers and the public of the latest news in the world of agriculture. It is hard to believe but June is almost complete, and summer has officially begun. The weather has put many nerves to the test to say the least, heavy rains, high winds, and dramatic shifts in temperatures has created a high level of stress in farm country. Last Friday feature very heavy winds that caused major damage to trees and structures. On my farm alone, three black locust trees were topped, and three wild cherry trees were split and damaged. For the most part crops faired well through the storm, some wheat did lodge and uncut hay fields did blow down. Speaking of hay most of the first cutting of hay has been completed after last week's stretch of nice weather. Today I want to address the next job in hay production probably is just as important as harvesting and baling and that is **Storage**.

So how to you store your hay? Storage losses can be as high as 30% so if you harvested 200 round bales that weigh 1000 lbs. each that is 200,000 pounds of hay or 100 tons you can potentially lose a potential of 30 tons of hay or 60 round bales. The last time I checked the hay market, Grass Mixed hay is bringing about \$150-\$180/ a ton or \$35-\$40 a bale. This means you could potentially lose \$1200 - \$5,400 in value of hay. This does include all the time, labor, and ware in tare on equipment to produce the hay to just lose it in storage. Storage loss can occur even when you think you have done everything right. Here are some steps and considerations to think about to prevent as much storage loss as possible:

1. **Outdoors or Indoors:** In a perfect world we would all have a large enough barn to put all the hay we produce in. This is not the case on most farms. Structures are expensive to build and maintain. If you do have some space for hay storage indoors dedicate this to high quality legume or mixed hay crops.
2. **Cover outdoor hay:** Hay cover tarps can be purchased to cover rows of round bale hay. Make sure to purchase high quality tarps with high tensile strength to resist ripping and taring.
3. **Bale large dense bales:** Bales stored outside should be made as dense as possible and large as possible. Smaller bales have a significant loss due to less protective layers.

4. **Store on well drained soils:** Row your bales on well drained medium sloped areas. Provided space between rows to avoid water dripping from one bale to another (3ft apart and but the bales tightly end to end).
5. **Avoid storage under trees:** A popular storage area is along the edge of field near a wooded area or tree line. This provides poor drying conditions and excess water from the tree dripline.



6. **Think about elevation:** Stone pads, old pallets, mushroom stacking, or old used tires can elevate hay off the ground.
7. **Wrapping:** Net wrapped hay provides 2 times better water shedding and less water wicking. (cost is .30-.50 a bale) Black plastic wrapping can be a good option for wrapping dry hay stored outdoors.

Some other details to go over:

- June 29th – Poison Hemlock Workshop. Located at Cherry Fork Community Park 14825 St Rt 136 Winchester Ohio 45697 (in shelter house) 1:00 pm. Discussion include ID, biology, control options. Call (937) 544 2339 to let us know if you would like to attend this FREE event.
- July 15th is the set deadline to report acreage planted to spring crops such as corn, soybeans, oats, alfalfa, Tomatoes, Potatoes and more. Contact the FSA Office to report once crops are planted.
- July 16th the Highland County Chamber of Commerce will be hosting a second BQA recertification event, call (937) 393-1111 to RSVP. This will be held at the Highland County fairgrounds.

- September 14th, 2021 Adams County BQA/ Cattle Handling workshop will be held at the Adams County fairgrounds (Show Arena) 5:30 to 8:00pm. Contact the Adams County Extension office at (937) 544-2339 to RSVP.

From the field

- Soybeans are close to being wrapped up.
- Japanese beetle has emerged.
- Started to notice water hemp growth in crop fields.
- Winter wheat beginning to dry, and head are turning down.
- First cutting hay almost complete.
- Tobacco flea beetle damage is present.
- Consider fertilizer or Lime applications after first cutting of hay (grass hay mix removes on average 12lbs of phosphorus and 48 lbs of potassium per ton of yield).
- Parasite Larvae is highest in late June to July Sheep producers need to consider worming schedule to prevent issues.