

# Stay Safe Making Hay When the Sun Shines

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Photo: Tractor and Baler

For many livestock producers June is a busy month, finishing the crop planting, caring for livestock, and harvesting first cutting of hay. Hay harvest can be a very labor intensive and time-consuming job. Hay harvest involves working around many different types of equipment, long hours spent in the field, exposure to dust, and numerous hours exposed to the sun. Here are some tips to stay safe and healthy while making hay in 2021.

## **Pace Yourself**

The hay making process is a very fast pace and labor-intensive process. Baling and storing hay should be done as fast and efficient as possible to maintain the quality of the hay. Changing weather conditions can easily shorten the harvest window making the process very challenging. Harvest your hay crop in intervals rather than trying to harvest the whole crop in one week.

## **Protect yourself**

It is a good practice to drink plenty of water (8 ounces every 15-30 minutes) and stay hydrated even if you are just operating equipment.

Harvesting Hay involves many hours in the sunlight, over exposure can cause many health effects with skin cancer being at the top of the list. Wear proper clothing to protect your skin, such as:

- Long sleeved shirts
- Long pants
- Wide brim hats
- Sunglasses

Apply sunscreen routinely or every 2-3 hours is a good practice to avoid over exposure and burning. Sunscreens with SPF 15 or higher are recommended.

Hay harvest is a dusty job, wearing a clean tight fitting dust mask while handling hay or cleaning equipment is recommended to avoid lung damage or irritation.

## Prevent Injury

- Follow and maintain safety signals on equipment.
- Disengage all power units before servicing equipment.
- Maintain equipment by lubricating and cleaning routinely, being sure to replace all safety shields following maintenance.
- Have a fire extinguisher attached to the baler.
- Wear heavy gloves when handling small square bales.
- Be aware of field conditions and maintain a safe speed.
- Watch for sink holes or ground hog holes.
- Watch for the safety of other workers and use proper hand signals to communicate in the field.
- Have a first aid kit on hand.



Photo – Newly developed sink hole

For more information and safety steps you can go to <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/aex-59126> and <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/aex-892276>

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