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CC157 More Production from Forage Acres

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More Production from Forage Acres

- Produce more with the feed you grow
- Select a system to save feed and labor

Extension Service - University of Nebraska
College of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating
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MORE PRODUCTION FROM FORAGE ACRES

Cut Forage at the Proper Time

To have the most crude protein and digestible protein and to obtain the most feed per acre:
- Prairie hay should be cut early. Quality decreases for mid-season or late cuts.
- Bromegrass should be cut just prior to bloom.
- Alfalfa hay should be cut at about the 1/10th bloom stage.

Should I Chop or Bale?

Baling
- Most convenient handling when hay is sold.
- Requires no special handling equipment after baling.
- Hay is generally field cured with possible high leaf loss.

Chopping
- Hay should be handled green, then forced-air dried or made into silage.
- Hay can be put up and self-fed with minimum of labor.
- Handling may be with elevator, blower, conveyor, or slings.

More Meat or Milk Per Acre of Feed

More feed of higher quality can be saved if hay is air dried or ensiled. Cornell studies show that barn dried alfalfa hay produced more milk per acre than other methods.

- Forced-air dried hay—2711 lbs. milk per acre.
- Silage—2621 lbs. milk per acre.
- Field cured hay—2129 lbs. milk per acre.

With field curing methods, one ton of legume hay is left in the field for every seven tons harvested. Most of this loss is in leaves high in protein and carotene.

Research shows that with forced-air drying methods, this eighth ton of hay will be saved. One ton of hay is gained and the quality is increased in the other seven because more leaves have been retained. Power costs for drying are generally under $1.25 per ton of dried hay. Drying can be done with equipment that is used for drying other crops.

Ensiling hay also saves leaves and allows hay to be put up during unfavorable weather. However, up to three times as much weight must be handled when forage is made into silage.

Storage Methods

Chopped hay can be forced-air dried in almost any mow or storage structure or in open stacks. For best drying results, hay should be chopped in as long lengths as can be handled with the mechanical equipment being used.

Silage can be made in upright, pit, or trench silos or in stacks. A new type of silo is the bunker—an above-ground, horizontal silo with concrete, frame, or earth walls.
Bunker silos with concrete floors have proved satisfactory for self-feeding silage. In the bunker, as in any silo, short lengths of cut (1 inch or under) and thorough packing can greatly reduce spoilage.

For long-time reserve storage a carefully constructed silo in a well-drained area will pay dividends. There are several reports of silage being held five years or more.

Reduce Feeding Labor

Plan storages and harvest methods to minimize labor in feeding. Plan to store hay or silage where it can be self-fed or where mechanical unloading and handling equipment can be used. Power equipment can be used with upright silos unloading either from the top or bottom. Such equipment is well suited for use with mechanical bunks.

See Your County Agent for Circulars on Hay Drying and Silos

EC 735. Curing Hay with Forced Air
Plan 73103. 50 Ton Self-Feeding Hay Keeper
Plan 73301. Bunker Silo of Portable Sections
Plan 5800. Bunker Silo (Frame Construction)
Plan 5801. Self-Feeding Fences for Bunker Silo
EC 728. Temporary or Emergency Silos
USDA AIB No. 149. Bunker Silos
USDA FB 1820. Silos — Types and Construction

This circular is a publication of the Drought Committee of the Nebraska College of Agriculture. It was prepared by E. A. Olson, Ted H. Doane, M. L. Mumgaard, and G. M. Petersen.