

Store Round Bales to Minimize Loss



The rain clouds are clearing in time for hay season in our area. Hopefully, the rain faucet won't turn completely off and we will continue to get rain throughout the summer months. A variety of big rounds, little squares and big squares will be seen throughout the county as producers are putting up hay and hay will be found both in barns and out in the fields. Bales that are stored outside can experience high nutrient losses due to rain.

Proper storage is important to reduce nutrient loss in bales stored outside. In a past Beef Cattle Institute Cattle Chat podcast Bob Larson, Kansas State University veterinarian said "Thirty percent of the bale is in the outer six inches so it doesn't take much spoilage to lose a third of the bale." He added that if weathering losses extend 18 inches into the bale, 75% of the hay is affected.

Here are some tips to help minimize loss:

- Store bales on a rock base. This helps keep the base of the bale from leaching moisture from the ground.
- Line large round bales north to south in rows and end-to-end.
 - Lining them up north to south, only the north end of the row to avoid the drying effects of the sunlight.
- Allow for enough space between the rows so they dry quickly after a rain.

Some loss will already occur due to feeding so minimizing loss during storage is important.

While putting up hay, it's also important to keep in mind the weather. The old adage "I can't bale it up if I don't cut it down" isn't the best philosophy if rain is forecast and it comes in and rains! Make sure and check the weather forecast either through local media sources or the National Weather Service, Wichita Office.