

Hay Storage Tips for Loss Reduction in Round Bales

The storage site is an important consideration in reducing bale losses. Select a site that is not shaded and is open to breezes to enhance drying conditions. The site should also be well-drained to minimize moisture absorption into the underside of the bales. As much as 12 inches of the bottom of a bale can be lost through moisture absorption resulting from the wicking action.. Ground contact can account for over half of the total dry matter losses. Where practical, keep bales off the ground using low cost, surplus materials such as discarded pallets, racks, fence posts, railroad ties, and used tires. Another alternative is to use a layer of crushed rock about six inches deep to ensure good drainage within and around the storage site.

Bales should be stored in rows, buffed end-to-end, and oriented in a north/south direction. The combination of the north/south orientation and at least three feet between rows will provide for good sunlight penetration and air flow, which will allow the area to dry faster after a rain.

Vegetation between rows should be mowed. Research has shown that orientation is a minor consideration if the bales are used before early spring because the losses are relatively small until that time. If stored into the summer, bales oriented in an east-west direction can experience severe deterioration on the north-facing surface.

In hay loss trials done by University of Tennessee, researchers determined round bales stored on the ground, not covered loss at 37%, while hay stored on old tires, covered loss dropped to 8%. In the barn stored hay loss was 6%.

A home owner recently bring in arm sized and smaller Pecan limbs that had snapped off due to weakening, apparently by a borer.

The red-shouldered shot-hole borer injures weak trees. Larvae feed in the wood, pupate, and emerge as adults through round holes in the bark about 1/8 inch in diameter. Usually many of these holes can be seen close together.

Because this insect feeds on dying or dead wood, remove prunings and dead limbs from the orchards and burn them. **Adequate fertilizer and water will keep trees in healthy** condition and prevent injury by this pest.

Hopefully, the weather will cooperate with some good growing rain, the remainder of this season. Please come by the office or call if we can be of further assistance.

John Holman, Extension Educator Ag/Youth Development

"The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer."