

Save hay by reducing feeding waste

Written by Wauneta Breeze
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By Bruce Anderson

Extension Forage Specialist

Much expense and many long hours go into harvesting and storing hay for winter feeding. So why waste it! Stay tuned for tips to minimize your hay losses.

Cattle waste as much as 45 percent of their hay when it is fed without restrictions. When hay is in short supply and as expensive as this year, how can you reduce these losses?

One of your first steps should be to limit how much hay is available. Research shows that cattle fed hay free access every four days needed about 25 percent more hay than cattle fed daily.

Daily feeding reduces the amount of hay refused, trampled, fouled, over-consumed, or used for bedding.

A second step is to restrict access to the hay by using hay racks, bale rings, electric fences, feed bunks, or anything else that will keep animals off the hay. It's especially important to limit the amount of hay accessible to trampling. So use racks or bale rings with solid barriers at the bottom to prevent livestock from pulling hay loose and dragging it out to be stepped on.

If you feed hay on the ground, either as loose hay, unrolled round bales, or ground hay, it is extra important to follow these guidelines. Limit the hay fed to an amount animals will clean up in a single meal because anything left over will be stepped on, fouled, or used for bedding instead of as feed.

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And if you can – use an electric wire or other barrier to restrict access to only one side of the feed on the ground.

With a little foresight and careful management, you can stretch your hay further.