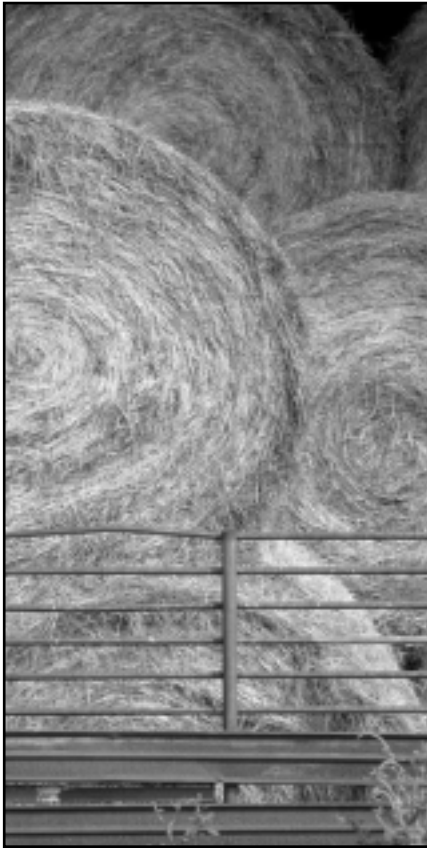


Reduce losses when feeding hay

In light of the disappointing growing conditions experienced by many beef producers this past summer, stretching existing forage supplies by reducing forage waste is especially important.

Large round bales are the forage package most widely used by beef producers in Kansas. This is undoubtedly due to labor-



When feeding large round bales, producers can minimize hay waste by feeding smaller amounts in well-drained areas, says K-State's Dale Blasi.

saving considerations, since this approach is about as close to a one-person operation as any hay-harvesting system can be.

Significant waste can occur when feeding large round bales unless care is taken. Losses vary with the particular system used. Factors that contribute to waste include trampling, leaf shatter, chemical and physical deterioration, and urine and fecal contamination. The extent of these losses depends upon the feeding method, interval between feedings, amount fed at one time, weather conditions and number of animals being fed.

When feeding large round bales, consider the following factors:

1. Feed hay in smaller amounts or in a feeder to minimize waste. When fed smaller quantities at feeding time, cattle have less opportunity to trample forage. If a multiple-day feed supply is provided, consider the use of a rack or hay ring to minimize waste (see Table 1).

2. Feed forage in well-drained areas.

Regularly rotate your feeding areas among well-drained sites. This practice will avoid pasture scarring and will reduce the amount of wasted/residual forage.

Kansas State University's (K-State's) Alberto Broce has recently demonstrated that wasted forage helps create ideal breeding areas for horn flies. So attention to this rather tedious management practice may pay off by reducing the number of flies the following summer.

No matter what size of hay package or feeding style you use, some hay will be lost or wasted. Attention to proper feeding management will reduce these losses. Since hay is expensive this year, it makes sense to try to minimize losses through good management practices.

— by Dale Blasi

Editor's Note: Dale Blasi is a beef specialist with K-State Research & Extension, which supplied this article.

Table 1: Estimated losses (expressed as a percent of hay offered) from different hay-feeding methods^a

Bale type	With rack		Without rack	
	One-day supply	Seven-day supply	One-day supply	Seven-day supply
Small square bales	4%	4%	7% ^b	
Large round or square bales	5%	5%	12% ^b	43% ^b
Formed haystacks	9%	15%	23%	41%
Small round bales (fed in place on pasture)	—	—	10%	30%

^aUniversity of Missouri, 2000.

^bBales spread or unrolled on pasture.