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Livestock and Natural Resources

Stacking Bales

With everything else we need to think about, here's one more. When the pandemic shut down happened, people stayed home, freeways and highways were desolate, airplanes even airplanes were grounded. We all kept farming, and cattle kept eating and burping. The funny thing is the atmosphere cleared up! We had the same number of cattle as before the COVID crisis. Yet, cattle are still getting blamed for ruining the earth. 2020 has just been a year of craziness.

Good news! Hay season is wrapping up, and as you begin to move bales off the field, remember that moisture is the enemy from now on. Good tight wrapped, dense bales with a net wrap will shed water faster than saggy bales with just twine. In fact, studies show net wrap bales save 32% dry matter losses when compared to twine tied and stored outside.

Stacking bales should be rows running north to south, with 18 inches to 3 feet between rows. This keeps adequate sunshine and breezes blowing, in the event of significant snows, it won't build up between the rows.

Don't stack under trees, don't attract lightning with other items around the bale pile. The pile should be located on well-drained soils. If you can use a rock base or pallets or even tires, you will save a lot of hay from the moisture at the bottom of the bale.

Remember the outer 4 inches of a big round bales is 25% of the bale. If you are going to stack them on top of one another or pyramid them, they need to be covered with a tarp.

Keep vegetation down around the bale pile for two reasons: first, it will be less of a fire hazard, and you can ward off rodents from nesting in your bales.

And speaking of fire risk, don't put all your bales in one pile! That way, you can mitigate your risk of fire and losing all the hay.

David G. Hallauer
District Extension Agent
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After the Harvest – Hay Field Evaluations

With hay harvest winding down, it's easy to get bales hauled away and forget about fields until we return to apply fertilizer for next year. With some of the production issues we saw in 2020, time spent on some post-harvest monitoring may be something to consider this year.

Ample moisture across much of the area has seen cool season stands green up. That's good, particularly when it could have been slowed by recent temperatures (cool season grasses much prefer 75 degrees over 95 degrees...). Hay fields I've monitored for canopy cover *have* showed reduced growth as temperatures climbed, but post-harvest greenup helped considerably.

The combination of good moisture and open canopy created by haying have also given weeds an opportunity to return. Now is a good time to monitor weed pressure to determine if control programs are necessary. The dogbane species have really taken off again this season. If this is the first year you've had an issue, it may be a coincidence. If it's a multiple year problem on the increase, it may be time to consider a control program. There are limited control products available for dogbane, with application to avoid damage to desired forages the key.

A lot can – and will – happen in the hay stand from now until fall dormancy. Armyworm invasions. Early freezes. Weed pressure. Too little moisture. All can affect the 2021 crop. All deserve attention now to help keep next year's production up to par.

Brown Patch of Turfgrass

Warm night time temperatures plus ample moisture staying on turf leaves in to late morning has resulted in one of our most troublesome turf grass diseases: brown patch. As damaging as it looks, brown patch is primarily a leaf issue. When severe, however, it can affect lower leaf sheath and crown areas, killing plants.

When evaluating stands, be patient. Most stands recover, but it will likely take three weeks plus, and will be weather dependent (the pathogen persists indefinitely in the soil, with weather typically the controlling factor as to its presence and damage level). Dig up plant roots/crowns and dissect them to check out tissue before making an overseeding decision.

Cultural practices can help reduce issues with the pathogen. Only irrigate early in the morning to reduce the time leaf tissue remains wet and susceptible to infection. Don't overfertilize, especially when the disease is active. When overseeding, don't get carried away, leaving 'room' in the stand for air movement.

Fungicides are effective, but generally only recommended if you want to maintain a blemish free lawn and are willing to apply rather expensive preventative fungicide products. Products with the active ingredients triadimefon, propiconazole, and myclobutanil are what are typically available to homeowners (triadimefon can provide three to five weeks of protection versus closer to two weeks for the others). None of the products will cure an infection already present. They are preventative only, meaning for best results, applications need to start in mid-June and continue through August.

In most years, tall fescue lawns will recover from infections. With the severity of this year's infections, overseeding may be necessary.

Cindy Williams
Meadowlark Extension District
Food, Nutrition, Health, and Safety

Fun Camping Foods for Kids

The family fun of camping season is upon us. Camping with kids while doing fun, healthy outdoor cooking is the best. Getting kids involved in the cooking process while keeping safety as a top priority can teach invaluable lessons and make great family memories.

Recipes that involve putting a mix of ingredients together into a foil packet allows kids to pick and choose what they want in their mix. Consider making Foil Packet Potatoes—

- *Diced potatoes
- *Sliced onions
- *Shredded cheese
- *Bacon bits
- *Butter or oil such as olive, canola, etc.
- *Herbs (basil, chives, etc.)
- *Salt and pepper to taste

1. Place the potatoes on pieces of heavy-duty foil. Sprinkle desired toppings over potatoes; dot with butter or lightly drizzle with oil.
2. Fold foil up around potatoes. Seal the edges of foil well. Grill, covered, over medium heat for 30-40 minutes or until potatoes are tender.

Cook's notes: Try to prepare as much in advance of your camping trip as possible such as shredding cheese and dicing onions. Place ingredients in plastic bags and keep cold in coolers until ready to use.

Building a variety of vegetables and meat on skewers to be grilled or cooked over the campfire can be another fun opportunity for children to help prepare a meal. Kids can learn more about the foods they eat and how to be safe when cooking. Be sure to review food safety with your child in any cooking environment.

Campfire Safety

Campfire safety will make the experience more enjoyable. Rules around campfires:

- *Safety always comes first!
- *a first aid kit, directions to the closest emergency care facility, and cell or land-line phone should be readily available before the campfire activity starts.
- *Always supervise children carefully. Absolutely no running or playing near campfires.
- *Never leave the campfire or grill unattended and have a bucket of water nearby. A responsible adult must be present at all times.
- *Have a safety circle around the campfire or grate.
- *Never wear loose or flammable clothing near campfires.

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Nancy Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

No news from Nancy this week.