

## Hay Feeding Management

Hay losses in various trials feeding big round bales range from two percent to sixty percent where no attempt was made to reduce losses. The simplest means to reduce loss is to utilize hay rings or racks when feeding round bales. Rings or racks limit access to hay and reduce losses by preventing cattle from trampling or bedding down in hay.

If you unroll hay for feeding, recent research at Purdue University shows that if you are unrolling more hay than the cattle can consume in four hours, you are probably overfeeding hay.

Location of where you feed hay can be important. Cattle tend to linger in hay feeding locations and return to these areas after going to water. Take advantage of this cow psychology by feeding in low use areas of the pasture to encourage cows to utilize the forage source in these under grazed areas. Use temporary feed grounds throughout a pasture saving sheltered spots and along streams for bad weather days.

Choice of feeding sites also has a big impact where manure is deposited. Areas in the pasture with thin poor soils are ideal feeding areas. Feeding hay in these areas, results in manure deposits that will build hummus and mineral deposits in the soil. A twelve hundred pound round bale of grass hay contains well over five dollars of nitrogen and phosphorus. These nutrients are worth much more spread across the pasture than being washed downstream with the first runoff event.