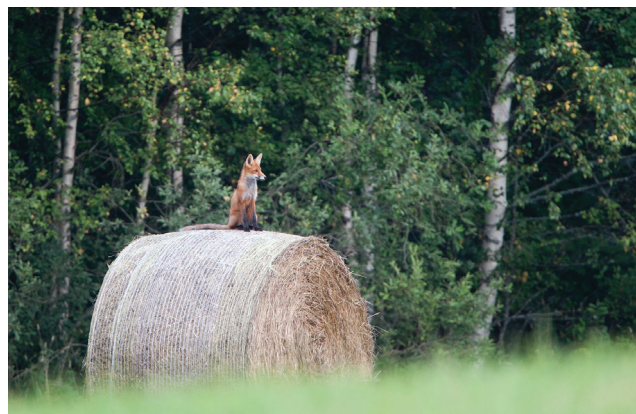


STORAGE OF WINTER FODDER



It is important to protect the hay from rain and snow both for the sake of animal health and economic profit. Hay packed in rolls is usually kept out in the open on the field for a few weeks, so that it dries up.



High-quality fodder is especially important for breeding animals. It is important to get a healthy and strong calf from the suckler cow each year, also to avoid any hindrances to growth of calves, because only cattle that grows steadily and fast can bring economic benefits.

HIGH-QUALITY FODDER

High-quality fodder is the most important prerequisite for growth of livestock. In the Baltic States today a lot of the hay is kept outside in the open. Mostly this kind of fodder is used for beef animals, while the quality of dairy cattle fodder is more attended to. Despite the fact that most of the beef cattle breeds are less demanding and tougher than dairy cattle breeds, they still need good-quality fodder.

BAD STORING CAN CAUSE HEALTH PROBLEMS

Low-quality fodder, which has lost some of its nutritional values due to bad storing conditions can cause many health problems to animals and also decrease the economic efficiency of herding.

PROBLEMS WITH HAY WHEN STORED INCORRECTLY

In bad storing conditions hay has an unpleasant smell and it is full of dust. To avoid the mould the moisture of hay must not exceed 15%.

Mould will grow in uncovered hay kept outside due to moisture, bovines do not like to eat it and their growth will slow down. In more serious cases animals can become sick because of big quantities of mold toxins or the general weakened health conditions and can cause injuries to fetus.

Even though contaminated hay is sometimes used for litter or livestock bedding, it is not recommended, especially when animals are kept in a barn, they can be harmed by the effect of mold and toxins.

TO CONSIDER

Even if "only" 10% of the hay is spoiled, money – to cover the work hours for making hay and fuel – has been wasted.



In many beef farms hay rolls are unprotected from rain and snow, which means that up to 20-30% of the fodder can be damaged, which in turn means wasted money.

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STORING FODDER

- It is important to protect the hay from rain and snow both for the sake of animal health and economic profit.
- Fodder must not have contact with soil or manure.
- Hay packed in rolls is usually kept out in the open on the field for a few weeks, so that it dries up. Only dry hay can be taken to the hay barn.
- If there is no means for building a hay barn, then the easiest and cheapest way is to cover the rolls with tarpaulin, which keeps off precipitation, at the same time as it "breathes".
- The tarpaulin should reach the ground on each side. It is advisable to cover the terrain under the rolls with sand – that prevents the unwanted effects of vermin and moisture.
- Covering the rolls with a plastic cover is not suitable, because it is not a wind-proof solution and causes condense water to form under it. A broken plastic cover with water pouring in is a much worse situation than keeping the hay out in the open.
- It is possible to use high polyethylene plastic tunnels, which are usually built as sheep barns or for fodder storage.
- Silage kept for a long period in plastic rolls on the field can also be spoiled when the cover is damaged by vermin or birds. That is why the best solution is to keep the silage rolls on a level ground (covered with sand or gravel), where there is no vegetation to attract vermin or predatory birds feeding off them.
- In high-quality silage the grass and herbs, or their pieces, have preserved their original structure and consistency, the silage itself is not slimy.



Top left: The tarpaulin should reach the ground on each side. Top right: Hay covered in part of existing cow house. When building a new barn, first you have to choose a good spot for it. Often new cow barns are built with facilities for storing hay. Bottom: It is possible to use high polyethylene plastic tunnels, which are usually built as sheep barns or for fodder storage.

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