

## Feeding Water-Damaged Feeds

Wet feeds may produce mold spores, some of which are toxic to certain livestock. If you must feed wet or flood-damaged feed, proceed very cautiously. Watch animals carefully for any signs of illness. Mixed feeds, grains and roughages which have heated or spoiled will have little nutritive value for livestock, depending on the extent of the damage.

- Do not feed heated, badly molded or sour feeds, deteriorated cottonseed or moldy legume hays (such as alfalfa or clover) to any livestock. Any feed that is moldy-smelling is generally not good for feeding.
- Spread wet feeds out to dry as soon as possible. Dried feeds can be fed in limited amounts to beef cattle and non-lactating dairy stock.
- Use extreme caution when feeding moldy protein concentrates.
- Mix moldy feed with 90 to 95 percent sound feeds at first. Watch cattle carefully.
  - Beef cattle on full feed may go off feed.
  - Some animals may exhibit poor gains or reduced energy; young animals are more susceptible to mycotoxins than mature animals of the species.
- Some animals may develop respiratory or nervous disorders from inhaling mold spores.
- Do not feed moldy feed to horses, sheep, swine or pregnant cattle; the animals may die. Do not feed moldy feed to lactating dairy cows.
- Some diseases are spread by water.
  - Any flooded feed could be contaminated, even when dried.
  - Watch animals for signs of nervousness, listlessness, going off feed and general unthriftiness.
  - Temporarily discontinue feeding questionable ration components until a veterinarian can confirm that the feed ration isn't related to the animal's malady.
  - Contact a veterinarian if you observe any undesirable symptoms in the animals being fed salvaged feed.

Adapted from The Disaster Handbook, 1998 National Edition, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida

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## Handling Flood-Damaged Hay/Haylage Fields

### Salvaging Wet Legumes or Wet Grass Hay

After flooding, some overly-mature alfalfa or clover-grass hay meadows can be partially salvaged by cutting and mixing with quality silage. It is critical to minimize any contaminants from the hay and to ensure that all legumes are free of mold that might affect animals that are fed the green chop. Legumes that get wet will mold; they should not be ensiled.

Often there is not a sufficient amount of forage available for mixing wet grass hays to achieve an economical hay/haylage mix. However, grass is less likely to mold than legumes, and there may be situations when the grass can be harvested and ensiled if mixed with quality ensilage. By ensiling two or more loads of quality hay silage before adding a load cut from wet hay, this forage may be salvaged. However, the nutritional value should be sampled to guide one on how best to utilize this ensilage. If nutritional content is low, this mix is not desirable forage for lactating dairy cows.

The advantage to this approach is that the damaged crop can be removed quickly in order to reduce the detrimental effect on the next cutting.

### Ensiling

Ensilage perennials in a conventional upright, horizontal bunker or temporary trench silo. To make a trench silo:

- Locate the trench where drainage is good.
- Design the trench for efficient feeding. A longer, fairly narrow, deep trench results in less silage deterioration and feeding loss than a wide, shallow trench.

To make the silage:

- Direct cut or wilt to 65 to 70 percent moisture.
- Chop finely.
- Pack thoroughly.
- If available, add 100 to 200 pounds of corn and cob chop to each ton of ensile nutrients. This will improve fermentation, quality and palatability.

### Legume or Hay Meadows

To minimize damage to hay/hayfields which were flooded:

- Remove existing “old” growth soon from fields that have not been harvested. This will allow a good crop after the flood.
- Utilize the grass as either hay or silage.
- If hay crop is silt-damaged, use a flail harvester or similar machine to spread the foliage somewhat uniformly back onto the field. Then immediately top-dress the cut over hay meadow with fertilizer. You may also want to apply nitrogen to stimulate grasses. Check with your county Extension agent for recommended application rates.
- On fields harvested just prior to the flood, make crop into hay or silage. Then top-dress with fertilizer. Check with your county Extension agent for specific recommendations.
- If post-flood growth is short or yellow, top-dress immediately.

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