

FOR RELEASE: Immediate
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SUBJECT: TIMELY TOPICS

Flooding-Don't Ignore Flood Damged Hay

It's difficult to save flood-damaged hay. But save it or not, you must act promptly, said Steve Barnhart, Iowa State University Extension agronomist.

If you want to try to salvage flood-damaged hay already in storage, Barnhart said to follow these steps:

1. Take dry hay off of wet hay to prevent moisture from spreading.
2. If the barn has enough room, scatter the wet hay. If not, drag it outside for drying. Cover as much as you can with tarps if it rains.
3. During the next three to four weeks, watch the hay for signs of heating. Some of these signs may be a strong burning odor, a noticeable vapor, or a hot feeling to the hand.

If the hay appears to be heating, check the temperature. Check the hay temperature every day. If the temperature of the hay rises to more than 140 degrees Fahrenheit, divide the hay into two piles and continue to check daily. If hay heats above 140 degrees Fahrenheit, it must be removed from a barn. Be careful.

"Move the hay slowly," Barnhart said. "Throwing or moving the hay fast may cause it to burst into flame. It is a good idea to have the local fire department standing by, or at least alerted, just in case of fire."

4. Dry the hay until it is as dry as expected for baling.

If you feel you don't want to salvage the wet hay, don't ignore it! Spontaneous combustion can occur within several weeks. The safest management is to remove the flood-damaged hay and get it away from buildings.

Flood-damaged large round bales will likely spoil excessively before they can dry again.

Don't count on much usable hay from flood-damaged bales. Heating and mold growth on watersoaked bales will greatly reduce the hay's feeding value and its palatability to livestock.

Contact the UW-Extension, Jefferson County Office at 920-674-7196 for more information about dairy and livestock management during and after the flood.

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