

Ten Points for Producing Hay

William T. W. Woodward

August 28, 2001

1. For high quality, cut at bud stage of growth. For higher yield and good quality, cut at 10% bloom (as soon as you see flowering).
2. Use a mechanical conditioner as it has been shown to hasten the drying process by as much as 30 percent.
3. Use wide airy windrows (4.5-6 ft.), as they dry more rapidly than conventional narrow windrows.
4. Rake when alfalfa reaches 35- 40% moisture. With high yields this is usually about 3 days.
5. Bale small bales at less than 20% moisture, 3 tie bales at less than 17% and large one ton at less than 14 %. Monitor with moisture probe.
6. Leave bales in field until afternoon.
7. Stack with spaces between stacks.
8. Keep rain from penetrating stack (tarp or storage unit).
9. Monitor bales with temperature probe.
 - a. Heating occurs in most hays baled above 15% moisture but will peak at about 125 degrees F in 3 to 7 days and then return to safe levels.
 - b. Above 130 degrees monitor closely
 - c. 150 degrees is beginning danger zone and check temperature daily.
 - d. 160 degrees is dangerous. Measure every four hours.
 - e. 175 degrees wet down hay and remove from barns, buildings or other dry hay. Call fire department.
 - f. 185 degrees-hot spots may occur and flames are likely to develop when heated hay comes in contact with air.
 - g. 212 degrees- Temperatures rise rapidly beyond this point and hay is almost certain to ignite.
10. Hay should be stable within 4 to 6 weeks after baling.