

Prevent Hay Fires

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Beef producers need to prevent hay fires. Hay is an expensive feed for cattle and must be managed so the hay and the storage structure are not destroyed.

Several steps must be followed to reduced the risk of hay fires. The first step is to harvest the hay and be sure that it is dry before baling. Wet hay in a bale provides the ideal location to start a fire.

Do not be in a big hurry to put the hay inside the barn. There must be enough time elapsed for the respiration to stop. A good indication that respiration has stopped is that the temperature has dropped and stabilized. Utilize a compost thermometer to monitor the temperature. Take several readings in several bales to make the determination. Do this over a period of time to determine if the temperature is increasing or decreasing.

Continue to use the compost thermometer to monitor the temperature of the hay in storage. It is best that the temperature stay under 130 degrees. If the reading is over 150 degrees, then pull the hay out of the barn so it can cool. If the temperature is 170 or above, a fire is imminent. Contact the local fire department and have a fire truck on standby as bales are removed.

In summary, hay fires can be prevented if precautions are taken. Contact your local Extension agent for more information.