



Preparing for Hay Season

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Following preventative maintenance suggestions can reduce stress from down time and ensure safe working conditions. Consider these practices when completing maintenance:

- Replace broken or worn parts to feed material properly into the bale chamber.
- Replace bent or loose blades on rotary cutters that are more prone to thrown objects.
- Ensure proper clearance between crimping rollers on mower conditioners.
- Don't overlook lubrication. Even though you may have greased all bearings and shafts thoroughly at the end of last season, pump in fresh grease now. This will force out all the moisture, which may have condensed inside during the winter. Wipe all grease fittings clean before applying grease gun; otherwise you may force dirt directly into the bearing along with grease.
- Always lubricate sprockets and chains when the machine is turned off.
- Whether in the shop or out in the field, always ensure the PTO is disengaged and the engine shut off before dismounting to service or adjust the equipment.
- With mowers and square bales, wait until all components have stopped moving.
- Always lock and block the rear gate if you must be underneath it.
- Be prepared for a fire. Carry a Class ABC fire extinguisher on ALL tractors. Ensure that all are charged and in working order.
- Keep all shields and safety guards in place. Replace immediately after maintenance is complete (don't wait until you are ready to go to the field).
- Consider removing dirt and debris with compressed air; water will cause rust and can reduce life of bearings and moving components.
- Check implement tires carefully. After several months of not being used repairs may be necessary.
- Go over all your machinery and tighten bolts, nuts and cap screws that have worked loose. This simple precaution can prevent serious and costly damage.



Regular maintenance and care extends the life of your equipment and maintains the value. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

Quality Hay Making Tips

- Set baler pickup tines about one inch above the ground. This helps prevent contaminating the hay with dirt, which raises ash percentages and reduces digestibility. Baler wear and tear caused by picking up stones also is reduced or eliminated.
- Set the hay pickup flotation so that the pickup follows the contour of the ground at or just above the tine height setting. If the tines aren't digging into the dirt, the flotation setting is about right. Regularly check the hay pickup for bent or broken tines and replace them as necessary. Be sure to stock up on replacement parts before the hay season begins.
- Synchronize the field speed and the baler pickup speed so the hay is lifted from the windrow and flows into the bale chamber. Pickup loss is lower when windrows are heavy because the baler is operated at a slower field speed, and there is less contact between the hay and the baler components.
- Bale chamber loss, particularly of the valuable leaves, is typically two to three times greater in round balers compared to square balers. To minimize bale chamber losses in round balers, the feed rate should be as high as possible to minimize the number of turns the hay makes within the bale chamber. This can be accomplished by using large windrows and high forward speeds. Since pickup losses are normally lower than chamber losses, it's usually better to have some pickup loss by driving faster but reducing the amount of time it takes to form the bale.
- Monitor bale density. Even if your baler has a density gauge, it is still critical to get out of the cab and "thump" bales to verify that the density is high enough so that bales hold their shape and provide maximum protection from the elements. *You don't want to be able to stick your fingers inside the bale.*
- Follow drive directional arrows on the baler monitor to make sure hay is fed consistently across the width of the bale chamber so bales have square shoulders. This helps round bales shed moisture, and improves stacking attributes of square bales.
- Hay moisture at baling is a critical factor in determining superior hay quality and long storage life. Assessing moisture before baling depends on whether it is stem moisture or moisture from dew. The moisture present from dew will seep through the hay to some degree, while stem moisture will not. When the stem moisture is too high, spoilage can occur. Moisture at baling for large square bales should be no greater than 12 to 15 percent; for round bales, no greater than 16 to 20 percent; and no greater than 18 to 20 percent for small-square bales. The exception to this rule is when hay preservative is applied during baling, which allows hay to be baled with moisture content up to 30 percent.
- To reduce leaf shatter and resulting nutrient losses, avoid baling when hay moisture is too low.

Beef is graded according to USDA quality standards that include: marbling, texture and firmness. Prime, choice and select are the typical grades placed on US beef. More than two thirds of U.S. production is described as choice. Demands for high-end cuts are increasing as the U.S. economy expands at the fastest pace in a decade.



If demand is unchanged, there will be a significant upward push on retail beef prices in the next year. As supplies of beef are reduced to historically low levels, the willingness of some U.S. consumers to pay record high retail beef prices is critical to monitor. The combination of higher prices and reduced per capita supplies will likely be met by more requests for beef quality.

In short, if we as beef producers expect to continue to sell high priced beef at retail, we should offer the highest quality product possible. The 500 pound bull calf with poor genetics, sent through the sale barn, may make you a lot of money now... but a high quality eating experience for the consumer will make everyone money for many years to come.

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