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To: Rains County Leader

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Producers this year have been really blessed with an abundance of hay. Many producers have more hay on hand than they will probably feed this winter. So we need to think about hay storage so we can carry over some hay to next year. Research has shown that you will lose 20-30% per bale of feedable hay in a years' time if it is carried over. There are several ways to reduce that amount of hay loss with proper storage.

The best method is to put the hay up in barns. If you do not have a large enough pole barn to currently store hay, building one can be a very costly endeavor.

Another very good method is to line the ground with wash white rock or old tires and stack the hay on rows on top of them. Then cover hay with polypropylene plastic. This will typically result in losses of only 5-10% per bale. The wicking actions of the tires or gravel will reduce hay rotting on the ground. The plastic on top will protect the top and sides of the hay.

Another thing we need to think about is to start preparing to plant winter pastures. Start preparing ground now for planting in early to mid-- September.

Over seeding ryegrass or other small grains in Bermuda grass fields have been very productive

over the past few years when drilled into the sod. If drilling is not possible, seed should be broadcast on a well prepared but firm seedbed, covered lightly with a disk and rolled for firmness.

Seeding rates should be 100 pounds of small grains and 20 pounds of ryegrass per acre. Producers should consider adding ryegrass to other small grain varieties because it grows well through late spring.

If soil test are taken follow those recommendations. In the absence of a soil test, use a minimum of 100 pounds of actual nitrogen, 60 pounds of Phosphorous and 60 pounds Potassium per acre at planting. Top-dress with 50-60 pounds of nitrogen in February and 50-60 pounds in April, especially if ryegrass is planted.

