

# Use hay tarps correctly and they pay for themselves



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**A**re you OK with needlessly losing money? If you aren't covering your hay, that's exactly what's happening.

It's a proven fact that uncovered hay sustains losses of 30 percent or more, and the nutritional value can decrease to the point that the forage becomes detrimental to the overall health of your livestock.

Hay is expensive! The cost of a typical round bale is around \$50. Figuring 100 bales at this price, a 30-percent loss equates to 30 bales or \$1,500. This is *more* than enough reason to

invest in good, quality hay tarps, but to get the maximum gain, those tarps need to last.

We're not talking about cheap utility tarps here, folks. While they might work as a short-term solution, these tarps are not made of ultraviolet (UV)-resistant materials and will deteriorate quickly, leaving holes that will funnel water directly into your hay. This can be more damaging than no tarp at all!

A heavy-duty, quality product — like our hay tarps from Inland Tarp and Cover and Tytan Industries — can easily last three to five years if well-cared-for, and the first step is proper installation. Tarps should be secured to the haystack with rope or a tie-down kit (#15424) running underneath the hay and attaching back to the tarp. This keeps it tucked close to the

bale and reduces the chances of wind getting underneath and damaging the tarp.

Avoid using pins or other anchors that cause the tarp to be secured away from the haystack, thus creating an open space for wind to get underneath. This is extremely important because tarp warranties don't cover wind damage — only manufacturer defects. It's kind of like a tree falling on a new car. The car is destroyed, but the vehicle manufacturer is not responsible for the damage the tree did.

Once the tarp is secured, check it frequently and re-tighten when necessary. This is especially important with fresh-rolled bales because they will settle over time.

As hay is removed from the stack, it's best to roll the tarp back neatly and resecure it

carefully. Allowing the tarp to simply fall down opens the door for damage by wind or deterioration from being crumpled on the ground. When all your hay is fed out, take time to neatly fold the tarp and store it indoors.

Another good idea is to put some sort of rodent repellent in and around the tarp. Rodents are very fond of chewing on tarps and making nests in them.

Remember: Hay tarps are an investment — not a disposable item — and used properly, they usually pay for themselves the first year. They're not cheap, but the benefits far outweigh the cost, and those benefits can be increased dramatically with a little extra care.

Stop by your local Co-op today to check out our high-quality hay tarps.

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