

Tips for Storing Feed in Hot Weather

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Being prepared for disasters that could affect your horses requires keeping an extra amount of feed ready to take with you in an emergency. In hot and muggy weather it is important to take special care of this reserve. Remember to rotate your emergency store with your regular feed so that you always have fresh food available for your horse.

■ Store your feed in a cool, dry and well-ventilated place. If there is a window in the feed room, you might consider putting in a window air conditioner just for the summer months. If the feed room does not have a window but has a door that shuts tightly, consider running a dehumidifier to remove moisture from the air. Using a closed bin for the feed is fine if it is in a cool place.

■ Do not buy any more feed than you can use in 10-14 days. Avoid taking advantage of summer specials that give a free bag if you buy a certain quantity (i.e. buy 10 bags and get one free); they are not a bargain if you lose two or more bags to spoilage. Protect feed from direct sunlight.

■ Allowing air to circulate around the bags keeps them from building up internal heat. Never set bags directly on the floor, especially if it is concrete as the bag will wick the moisture right up and spoil the feed. Pallets are ideal

because they set the bags high enough off the floor to let air circulate underneath them. If possible, set the bags up on end and apart to allow the air to circulate around the entire bag. In areas with high levels of heat and humidity, such as the southern United States, bags should be stacked no more than four high, and there should be space for air circulation between the stacks.

■ Allow any heat within the bags to be released by “jouncing” or shaking the bags, which will also reduce clumping of the feed. Remove any shrink-wrap from bags because it will restrict the bags from breathing. Similarly, avoid storing feed in plastic trash cans because they too will limit air movement. Galvanized steel cans have a tendency to sweat on the inside if they hold a high moisture feed. If containers are used, be sure to clean out the remains of old feed before adding any new feed to a container. Avoid storing feed in bulk bins in the summer.



■ Pelleted feeds keep longer than sweet feeds, in general. The molasses in sweet feeds may spoil, while pelleted feeds are likely to mold. High fat feeds also will go rancid fairly rapidly in the heat and must be used quickly. Many feed mills increase the amount of mold inhibitor used during the summer months.

■ Horses have a very sensitive sense of smell. If you can smell that a feed is going bad, you can be sure that your horse can, too. It is a good idea to check any feed before feeding it.

■ If your horse has eaten spoiled feed, some signs to look for are loss of appetite, diarrhea, and most importantly, colic. ☹️