

Summertime Feed Management

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Rising temperatures and increasing humidity can make feeds and feeders mold growing machines and can degrade pellet quality. Proper storing of feeds and maintenance of feeders will help prevent mold growth and reduce fines.

Considerations for storing grain-based feeds

Molds grow in warm, wet environments making the heat and humidity of summer the perfect season for mold growth. Taking these simple steps when storing feeds will help prevent mold:

1. Always remove shrink wrap from pallets of feed: Feed bags are designed to breathe and give moisture an avenue in which to escape. If the plastic wrapping is left on the pallets, it traps the moisture inside the bags. This moisture in combination with the warm temperatures of summer lead to mold.
2. Keep feed up off of the floor. This will allow air to circulate, prevent any water that may collect on the floor from reaching the bags, and reduce rodent damage.
3. Keep in mind that texturized feeds containing molasses are more likely to mold. Buy these types of feeds in amounts that you can confidently move through quickly.
4. Rotate stocks. It's an easy thing to overlook this and to find bags of feed you purchased over a year ago sitting in the back of your warehouse or storage shed.
5. Consider using a mold inhibitor in grain-containing feeds that will be stored over the summer. Many commercial products are available and can be used by dealers and producers.

Managing urea containing pellets

Urea and potassium are both hygroscopic, meaning they draw in moisture out of the atmosphere and pull it into the pellets. Moisture will cause pellets to swell and lose their integrity. High urea pellets left exposed to the atmosphere on hot humid days will swell and become soft leading to fines and poor flowability. You may want to consider purchasing a feed with lower urea content during the summer to avoid these issues. When using high urea pellets be mindful of how many times the feed is augered before reaching the animal (supplier to dealer to feed bin to farm mixer to feeder). Try to auger the product less as augering deteriorates the pellet. When mixing corn pellets to feed out, only mix long enough to distribute the product. Do not overmix.

Bunker and Feeder Management

Make sure the feed you are providing your livestock is going towards *their* growth and not that of mold. Follow these tips for bunk and feeder management:

1. Remove old feed from feed bunks daily. Not only will this prevent mold, but also prevent flies from laying eggs in the old feed.
2. Keep feed fresh during hot humid weeks of summer. Feed will not last as long in bunks during this type of weather.
3. For self-feeders in finishing lots, management depends on the type of feed being used
 - a. For corn-pellet diets, adjust the feeder so that the feed does not exceed $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in depth. This will prevent moisture build up on unconsumed feed and prevent fines. If fines do build up, remove promptly and adjust feed flow accordingly.
 - b. For co-product diets, where all the feed is comprised of fine particles, the pan will tend to be more full than with corn-pellets but should not be mounded or overflowing. Clean regularly to remove buildup of contaminated feed.
4. Feed that has been rained on will get moldy fast. Keep feed protected from the elements. If feed does get wet, remove affected feed and any sitting water before adding new feed.
5. Avoid offering moldy feed to your livestock.