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## **Transporting Large Round Bales**

Since the widespread adoption of large round bale production in the 1970s, hay has been rolled up in one field and provided as feed in another field at a time when livestock nutrient needs are not met by their current pasture.

Round bales can be readily handled by tractor or pickup mounted spears, hydraulic arms that move up and down, with the ability to squeeze a bale or special wagons. Tractor front-end loaders can be used to move and load large round bales, but use care to prevent accidents involving tractor tipping, or allowing the bale to fall or roll from the loader on to the operator. These single bale devices are great for very short distances but are inefficient when it comes to long distances or high volumes of hay. Tractor-powered or self-propelled large round bale loaders and transporters are available for large volume situations. There are many round bale trailers on the market that allow for safe hauling of round bales, with easy allowances for securing bales with straps.

Research shows losses of 1-10% of yield when large round bales are moved from a field to a storage site. Loss occurs when the bales remain in the hay production field too long; they become less round, or the twine or net wrap begins to deteriorate. To counteract these problems, remove bales to their more permanent storage space as soon as possible after harvest. Make a dense bale in a cylindrical form and use care when handling.

The round bale's shape and size make it nearly impossible to achieve a transport payload comparable to rectangular bales. Long distance transport of round bales is typically impractical; due to their cylindrical shape and heavy weight, loads become unbalanced easily. For easier transportation, consider a four-foot-wide round bale that fits better on trucks than wider round bales. A disadvantage of four-foot-wide bales, however, is they tend to fall over when ejected from the baler, or when speared with a bale spike for moving. Toppling increases as the diameter goes up; a 4x6 bale will tip more easily than a 4x5 bale. When the bales topple over, exposure to rainfall intensifies and the excessive moisture encourages hay degradation. Daily heating of the wet round bale results in a significant reduction in feed quality.

Long distance transportation of large round bales on public highways is covered by certain highway regulations. Kansas law establishes the maximum load width, height and length and method of securing the load. State law says a load must be securely fastened to prevent bales

from becoming loose. Consult local law enforcement officials for the current regulations on the highways you'll travel, in and out of state.

For more information on utilizing preserved forage, contact Wendie Powell, Livestock Production Agent, (620) 784-5337, [wendiepowell@ksu.edu](mailto:wendiepowell@ksu.edu) .

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