

Producers Discuss Bird-Damaged Silage Bags

GREEN BAY, Wis. — A recent discussion on the Kansas State Silage-L Internet site highlighted several possible solutions to the problems caused by bird damage to silage bags.

The first comments on bird damaged silage bags came from Thunder Bay, Ontario. The producer noted, "We've recently had a lot of bird damage on some bags filled with alfalfa silage. The bags had no holes for several months, and in the last two days it has been quite bad. Today, I placed a radio out on the pad playing a talk station. Will this help?"

The first producer to respond sent a picture of how they handle the problem of bird damage. They note, "on top of the bags we use paper stripes or even a net to repel the birds." In the picture there were bales of hay on top of the bags with a post driven through it. The netting is then placed on top of the bales, and hooked on to the posts. The bales appear to be approximately 10 feet apart.

Other producers wrote in comments, each with their own solution, noting that no solution seemed to be fool proof. Several suggested placing a wire running lengthwise along the bag. Some noted that this seemed to help somewhat with birds, but not with other varmint such as rodents, deer, cats, or dogs. Most noted that the radio would soon lose its

effectiveness as the birds became accustomed to the noise.

Joe Shefchik, spokesperson for the Crop Storage Institute, notes "This is a widespread problem with no clear solution at this time. While almost everyone has a suggestion on how to limit the damage, it is still a very real risk of storing forage in silage bags. The effects of this problem in terms of quality and dry matter losses are very difficult to measure. There is only one bag that I am aware of that was tested for dry matter losses after it suffered bird damage. This bag was at the University of Wisconsin where they found losses exceeding 30 percent."

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