FEED STORAGE

Why should you be concerned?

Silage is an important source of stored feed for livestock. However, if silage is not harvested, handled or stored properly, seepage may escape from the feed storage. Nutrients contained in seepage can enter surface waterbodies directly through runoff, or can enter surface water and groundwater by percolating through the soil. Seepage contains high concentrations of nutrients and acid that can increase the levels of ammonia and nitrate present in the water and negatively affect water quality.

Dry forage or grain that has spoiled can cause disease problems in livestock and can seriously affect the profitability of an operation. Spoiled forage or grain should be disposed of by composting or incorporating within a solid manure storage system. Surplus forage carried over from one season should be protected from spoilage. Spoiled grain can cause problems for livestock and should be disposed of in an environmentally sound manner.

What can you do?

1. Harvest and store silage at the appropriate moisture level to minimize seepage. Moisture control is enhanced by using a roof or cover. Silage characteristics can also be improved by using inoculants and using correct packing density.
2. Install a seepage collection system and monitor it regularly to make sure it remains contained within the silage storage system.
3. Inspect facilities regularly to make sure all parts of your silage and other feed storage structures, including the lining, are in good condition. Perform routine maintenance.
4. Manage silage, dry forage and feed grain storages to minimize losses, spoilage and maintain production margins.
5. Locate silage storage facilities away from surface watercourses or wells. Prevent runoff from entering silage bunker, silage pile or baled silage storage.
6. Use this worksheet to find out if you are reducing the risk of water pollution from feed seepage.
7. Contact your local GO Office for additional information and support, or other appropriate agricultural extension specialist.