



Agricultural
Research
Service

South
Atlantic
Area

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FEEDING HAY ON A HEAVY USE AREA

Why Does it matter?

Winters in the Southeast, while not usually harsh, are often very wet for extended periods of time. Because most livestock producers feed hay to their animals during this period, it is important to develop and implement practices that allow producers to feed hay with minimal impact to the environment in general and their pastures in particular.

What was done?

Following guidelines described in the NRCS's Conservation Security Program, heavy use areas were constructed to provide a weatherproof area for hay feeding. After site selection, the following steps were taken:

1. site excavated to a depth of six inches
2. eighteen inch deep trench dug around the perimeter of site
3. geo-textile fabric laid across the site and "tucked in" the trench
4. trench backfilled
5. six inches of crusher-run stone applied on top of geo-textile fabric
6. stone smoothed and packed
7. mobile hay wagon purchased and placed on the pad



What was found?

Positive benefits of feeding on heavy use areas include:

1. greatly reduced destruction of feeding area
2. less money and labor required to repair feeding areas
3. more efficient use of hay
4. fewer trips to and from pasture
5. positive impact on herd health

What is the impact?

Most of the approximately 144,000 livestock producers in the Southeast feed hay during the winter months. Environmental benefits of feeding on a heavy use area include: decreased surface water run-off and sediment losses, reduced soil compaction, and protection of forages. Economic benefits include: greater efficiency of hay fed, and reductions in labor both in feeding and pasture repair.

Research Team and Contact information

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