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 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **EPA Proposes Changes for Pesticide Applicators**

In case you missed it in an earlier column, here are the links explaining the proposed changes. If you would like to be able to read the proposals without typing in the links, go to <http://corn.osu.edu> and the links should be hot. The public may comment on the EPA's proposal through November 23, 2015.

## **How poor is Your Hay?**

With the summer of 2015 now behind us we have seen that some things were not as bad as we initially thought they might be when it finally quit raining in July. For some of the three counties I cover, the time since the rain stopped in July has a different meaning than in other locations. The southern part of the three counties has seen fairly regular moisture since, while the northern part of Highland is more like the rest of Ohio. Most of Ohio has been really dry since August until the past few weeks.

The results of the rain, and in some cases the lack of rain, has caused crops to suffer. While yields in the drier areas have not been up to the norm, some of the producers in the areas that did have moisture in the later part of the growing season is reporting very good yields considering what we all dealt with in late June and July. One producer recently told me that he may have just harvested his best yield ever for soybeans, overall. Some fields were somewhat poor, but overall he is very pleased. Even areas that suffered significant losses in the Sardinia and Mowrystown area in some fields, some producers have reported that their overall crop average is not too bad, all things considered. The corn crop is still being harvested in some areas, but most have reported good numbers there, too.

While the results seem to be better than expected for most producers with harvesting grain, I am not too sure we should bank on this outcome when it comes to our forages. The hay that was made at a normal date should not be an issue; however, many producers were really late with harvesting their first cutting of hay. With the recent winter of 2013 as a reminder, we can all probably relate to someone who lost a few cows that winter. It was a cold winter and the feed value may not have been great, but it was most likely better than much of what we have in a bale to feed in the next few months. With that said, there was an article that appeared in the Beef Blog last week that was in the Progressive Farmer. It was written by Becky Mills and it quotes a Forage Specialist from the University of Georgia about the situation of feeding low quality forages. It also addresses some of the pros and cons of feeding different supplements when you know you have a low quality forage. The title of the article was "Starving To Death On A Full Stomach".



Here is how the article starts out. It was the perfect storm. Actually, it was a series of storms. In the summer of 2013, it rained incessantly, Phil Moshell recalled. It left the cattleman baling 10- and 12-week-old grass, instead of 4- and 5-week-old grass. Doesn't that sound like our area just a few months ago? "It was next to worthless. The Relative Forage Quality [RFQ] averaged 70. University of Georgia (UGA) Extension forage specialist Dennis Hancock said the constant rain kept producers out of fields and left them baling overly mature forage.

To try to meet the animals' nutritional needs, (a producer) Moshell fed them eight trailer loads of whole cottonseed that winter. He didn't lose any cows, but other producers were not as fortunate. Lee Jones, a veterinarian at the UGA Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratories Tifton Lab, said cows were dying from an impacted omasum, the third of four chambers in a ruminant's stomach. The four chambers are the rumen, reticulum, omasum and abomasum.

"The digestibility of the hay was so bad, it was leaving the rumen without being broken down," Jones explains. "The hay was just packing up the omasum."

In cattle, the omasum should be the size of a basketball. In some cases, Jones recalls seeing omasums so distended they were the size of the animal's rumen. The rumen, similar to a giant fermentation vat, can hold up to 50 gallons and takes up roughly half of a cow's abdomen. When omasums become as enlarged as these were, hay just can't go any farther through the digestive process. "Cows were eating as much as they could, but they were literally starving to death with full bellies," he said.

There was another common factor in the cow deaths besides poor-quality hay. Producers were relying on molasses lick tanks to supplement the animals. "If you have good-quality forage, I don't have a problem with lick tanks," said UGA beef cattle Extension specialist Jacob Segers. However, he said there are downsides to using lick tanks to supplement poor hay.

"They are sold as a protein supplement, and many are urea based. Urea provides nitrogen for the rumen microbes to use as building blocks for crude protein," Segers said. Urea stays in the rumen for two or three hours, whereas hay can stay there for a day or longer. That means the urea isn't available to the rumen microbes to help digest forage. Another drawback with molasses in a situation where hay is very poor is that the lick tanks increase an animal's appetite. If cows only have poor-quality hay, they will gorge on that, leading to impactions.

He explained soy hulls, citrus pulp or distillers grains can also work in a ration, adding that corn may not be the best answer for cows on a forage-based diet. "Corn is a great energy supplement," Segers said. "However, hay digests most efficiently with a more neutral rumen pH. A lot of starch lowers the pH. We want that in a feedlot animal, but with cows, we try to maintain a rumen environment that is pasture-friendly." If you need help choosing a supplement or building a ration, your county Extension agent or feed salesman should be able to help. But Segers stressed it's important to tell them you want a supplement that will not hinder fiber digestion. When choosing a supplement, it's important to be sure you're armed with the facts. Get a forage analysis done on any hay you plan to feed the herd. "Without knowing what is in the hay, you're just guessing," Segers emphasized. He adds no one can tell what's in a handful of hay without an analysis.