Utilization of Round Bale Silage as a Compliment to Hay Production
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Introduction
Conservation of forages for later feeding is limited by a number of challenges. The timely harvest of forage in Florida for hay production is often limited by optimal drying conditions. Therefore, alternative methods of forage conservation need to be examined. Round bale silage (RBS) offers an alternative forage harvesting and storage system to traditional hay harvest and storage. The use of RBS may be an attractive compliment to traditional hay harvest system by overcoming several of the challenges to hay production in the Southeast.

Advantages
- Do not need sequential drying days to harvest forage
- Flexibility to conserve forage when the crop is at its nutritional peak
- Reduced field loss
- Reduced storage loss
- Increased dry matter (DM) recovery
- Increased nutrient recovery
- Dual use of equipment

Disadvantages
- Plastic cover cost / disposal
- Plastic damage during storage
- Special tape to seal damage
- Increased cost per bale
- Potential for increased spoilage / loss
- Limited transportation / storage options

Considerations for Making Round Bale Silage
- Fermentation quality of RBS is dependent on excluding air from the bale and wrap
- Bale needs to be tight and well-shaped
- Make bales as consistent as possible
- Use untreated sisal or plastic twine, or net-wrap
- 40-50% DM is optimum for RBS
- Wilting 2-3 hours improved quality, intake, and performance of beef heifers
- Wrap bales within 2 hours of baling
- Wrap bales with 4-6 layers of film
- Make tubes straight and even as possible
- Bales need to stay in the plastic a minimum of 30 days, more is desirable

Probability of a 3-day dry period for hay harvest

- Probabilities: April (50%), May (25%), June (20%), July (15%), August (10%), September (5%)