MAKING HAY USING A PIT

- Remove/pull out hay bale from the pit and store in a cool dry place

Ready hay bale out of a pit
Introduction

Hay is fodder conserved in dry form (when at high nutritive value stage). This is usually done when there is excess forage on-farm to be used in times of feed shortage for improved animal nutrition. Pit hay making is a cheap method of preparing hay for dry season feeding at small-scale farm level. It is simple, cheap and easy to adopt. The farmer uses material that is locally available on-farm.

Hay pit

- Select site in a well-drained ground near a grass field
- Dig a pit measuring 70 x 45 x 40 cm
- Line the pit with polythene sheet to avoid the grass coming in contact with the soil

Fodder for making hay

Good quality hay is made from grasses of low moisture content especially grasses harvested at early flowering stage.

Requirements for making pit hay

- Hay pit
- A jembe/hoe for making the pit
- A tape measure or ruler for setting the hay pit on the ground
- A panga/machete for shaping the hay pit
- Polythene sheet for lining inside the hay pit
- Sisal twine for tying the grass into a bale of hay
- Wooden pegs for marking the ground for the hay pit

Procedure of making pit hay

- Cut grass at the early flowering stage, at least 5 cm above the ground for better re-growth
- Spread the grass under shade for 2-3 days depending on the weather and let it wilt. Direct drying on the sun is not recommended as it lowers quality
- Take the sisal twine in double strands and 1st put it across the 70 cm length ensuring that the strands exceed the 70 cm length to make it easy to tie the hay bale
- Put the 2nd double strands across the 45 cm width to make sure the strands exceed the 45 cm width to make it easy to tie the hay bale
- Fill the pit with wilted grass, compressing firmly by stepping on it, to take the shape of the pit up to the top
- Tie the loose ends of the sisal earlier put in the pit lengthwise and width wise
- Lift the tied hay bale out of the hay pit and store in a cool dry place free of moisture, sunshine, rodents and termites
- Repeat the process until all the material is finished

A complete hay pit

Compressing hay in a pit

Tying a hay bale