

# Making best silage: Top tips for better bale handling and storage.

**The correct handling and storage of bales is vital to preserve and retain the quality and nutritional value of the feed inside. Here, Lloyd Dawson, Sales Manager at bpi.minster films helps us with a few tips on the ‘do’s and don’ts’.**

*“When all your bales are wrapped, farm workers must be aware of the importance of correct storage methods and not be tempted to leave them exposed and just hope for the best. Also, being aware of the damage that can be caused when transferring bales from the field into storage and also knowing where to store them is the key to a successful season. Adhering to the following rules will give farmers and contractors alike the best chance of achieving quality feed and ensuring their initial hard work is not wasted.”*



## Checklist

- Despatch bales gently from the bale wrapper to avoid damage, in particular on grass stubble.
- Always use a purpose built bale handler but never a spike that will puncture the air tight seal of the bale.
- When moving the bales by trailer, cover any sharp edges with tarpaulin or matting and handle gently. Any damage must be repaired immediately using a suitable UV protected tape.
- Stack bales as soon as possible after wrapping and certainly within 24 hours. Remember that field – wrapped bales in particular are prone to bird damage from the moment they are wrapped.
- Choose a storage site away from trees and very exposed areas.
- The site should be well drained and level, and devoid of sharp objects which may puncture bales.
- If practical, a sand base layer is recommended. Ideally, roll out a protective layer of heavy gauge polythene sheeting underneath the stack.
- Where necessary, protect the stack from farm animals with suitable fencing. Domestic cats should also be discouraged.
- Store away from water courses. Specific advice is available from your local Water Authority on any specific regulations.
- Keep away from fertilizers, herbicides, mineral oils, etc which can damage the film.
- Do not stack bales more than three high. Bales of low dry matter (which are heavier) should be stored in a single layer. This prevents bales at the bottom being squashed under the weight and ‘blowing’ the balewrap seal.
- Once stacked, always protect your bales from birds by applying a close woven polypropylene net. Support the net so that it is not in direct contact with the surface of the bales where birds could land and reach through the net. Secure the net at ground level.
- Place weather-protected vermin bait stations around stack perimeter, and replenish as necessary. Ensure these are also protected from pets and farm animals.
- Check bales regularly for damage, and re-seal.

*Remember bales that have been incorrectly wrapped with uneven overlap or insufficient layers are prone to air ingress leading to spoilage and moulds. Similarly wrapped bales that have been damaged and remain un-repaired with a suitable UV protected tape are also very likely to have spoilage and moulds.*

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