



University of Wisconsin Center for Agricultural Safety and Health

**Department of Biological Systems Engineering
University of Wisconsin - Madison / Extension**

Estimated Hay Mow Usage and Hay Mow Chute Guarding

Mark Purschwitz, Extension Agricultural Safety and Health Specialist

David Kammel, Extension Agricultural Engineer

Wisconsin has 20,419 dairy herds, according to Wisconsin 2000 Agricultural Statistics, published by the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service. Even though increasing numbers of farms are using large hay bales or not baling any hay at all, choosing to use strictly silage, the small rectangular hay bale is still quite common. The use of hay mows in two-story barns, most of which are quite old, is quite common as well. People have been known to fall through the open holes (chutes) in the floor of hay mows.

E-mail surveys were taken of University of Wisconsin - Extension county agricultural agents to obtain estimates of the percentage of hay mows with guarding to prevent a person falling from a stack of bales down through the chute, and also the percentage of farms still using small hay bales in hay mows.

Method

Agents were asked the following two questions:

1. “Consider a basic two-story dairy barn and hay mow, with a hole in the center of the mow floor for tossing down bales. Say the mow is fairly full, the bales stacked high, and the door of the hole is currently open so that someone can toss down bales. Based on your knowledge and experience, what percentage of the barns in use today have a guard or protective framework extending up from the mow floor that would prevent a person who is standing on top of the stack of bales from accidentally falling down the hole? In other words, a guard or framework that would allow the person to toss down bales but prevent that person from falling down themselves.”
2. “Of the dairy farms in your county, what percentage do you think still use small bales stored in a hay mow above the cattle?”

The 2000 Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics provides dairy herd numbers by county. For each responding county, the estimated percent of farms with guarding of chutes, or still using small hay bales, was multiplied times the number of dairy herds in that county to get an estimated number of farms in that county with guarding of chutes or still using small bales. The totals from all responding counties were added together and divided by the total number of dairy farms in the responding counties, to arrive at an overall percentage for those counties and thus an estimated percentage for the state.

Estimated Hay Mow Usage and Hay Mow Chute Guarding, cont.

Results

Hay Mow Chute Guarding

number of counties responding:	30
number of dairy herds represented by those counties:	9041
estimated number of barns with chute guarding:	428
estimated percentage of farms with chute guarding:	4.7 %

Hay Mow Usage

number of counties responding:	33
number of dairy herds represented by those counties:	10497
estimated number of farms still using small bales in hay mows:	6600
estimated percentage of farms still using small bales in hay mows:	62.9 %

The responding counties were scattered geographically around the state and the assumption is made that they are representative of the state. Thus it is estimated that approximately 63 percent of Wisconsin dairy farms still use small bales in hay mows, and less than five (5) percent of them have hay mow chute guarding. Clearly these are rough estimates, but it is safe to say that small hay bales are still very commonly used by Wisconsin dairy farmers, and that guarding of hay mow chutes is very uncommon.

June 2001