



News Release

Storage Solutions for Distillers Grains

You've decided to start using distillers grain in your feeding program. Now the questions are how do I store it, where do I store it and what's the best storage strategy for my operation? According to Dr. Simone Holt, Beef Nutritionist for Hubbard Feeds, the answer depends on several factors.

"What type of product you purchase and the number of cattle you're feeding will be the biggest indicators of how and where you store the distillers.

There are three basic types of distillers. Dry distillers grains have 90-percent dry matter. Modified distillers grains have 50-percent dry matter; and wet distillers grains have 35-percent dry matter.

"Spoilage can happen quite quickly as we get into the wetter products," Dr. Holt said. "So storage and handling of these products is the key to how long they will last and how much storage loss you will have."

There are three main storage methods that have proven effective for the various distiller products according to Dr. Holt.

1. Storing dry product in a bin
2. Storing wet product in a bunker, commodity shed or on the ground in a pile
3. Ag bags, which are a method of sealed feed storage in a high quality polyethylene bag

Dry distillers or dry gluten can be relatively easy to store in a bin or in a commodity building that has some protection from the weather. Dr. Holt says the distillers will store well for a long period of time without any type of preservatives because of its low moisture content.

Modified and Wet distillers grains can be more of a challenge to store, especially in the summer, because of their higher moisture content. "The shelf life of these products will run somewhere between three and five days piled on the ground without any molding occurring," Dr. Holt said. "After that time we generally see some mold or spoilage starting to occur. In the winter these high moisture products will last a little longer; you can go out two weeks without problems with spoilage." Holt recommends ag bags as another solution to long-term storage of co-products. "There are a couple of ways to go about this. The modified distillers grain (50% DM) product can be stored in an ag bag quite easily. However, it does tend to flatten out a little because it contains a higher moisture content. You can expect to see three- to six-percent storage loss associated with using the ag bags.

“When storing Wet distillers grains (35%DM), we are seeing producers mixing this product with dry hay or straw and then bagging, because the wet product doesn’t store very well by itself in an ag bag. Wet distillers grains tend to break the bag because of the pressure from the bagging machines and the additional weight from the moisture. So mixing ten- to fifteen-percent straw or hay to make it a more substantial product to push into the bag does help. This combination will store fairly well for an indefinite amount of time. Once the bag is open you should take about a foot per-day off the face of the product. If not, you could encounter some spoilage around the face.”

Long Term vs. Short Term Strategies

The best strategy for storage will again depend on the type of distillers grain you’re going to store.

“For the high moisture distillers products, ag bags and covered bunker silos are working very well for long-term storage,” Dr. Holt said. “Short-term storage is going to be on the ground, or on a cement pad in a commodity building. You should get from five days to two weeks storage on the ground. That is compared to several months storage in bags or covered bunkers.”

Dr. Holt says that producers have to take storage loss into account when calculating how much co-product to purchase and how much a distillers feeding program will cost.

“You have to take into account the shrinkage that occurs. You can estimate around three to fifteen-percent loss. Storage losses of up to fifteen-percent for wet distillers grains (35%DM) and ten-percent for modified distillers grains (50% DM). In an ag bag shrinkage will be around three- to six-percent.”

Dr. Holt recommends that all producers should ask these key questions when considering their distillers purchase:

- What is the cost of the product?
- Distance to plant?
- What type of cattle am I feeding? (eg. Cow/calf pairs, backgrounding, finishing).

These factors will determine how much of this product producers can feed per day and what type of storage options are available.

Hubbard Feeds consultants are available to discuss GainRite as part of an efficient distillers feeding program. For more information on distillers feeding programs and storage solutions, visit www.FeedingDistillers.com or contact a Hubbard representative at 1-800-869-7219.