

stubble, rocks or other things that stress the plastic, resulting in holes after a few months.

Bale Moving

- Moving wrapped bales from field to storage area is best done with equipment designed specifically for handling wrapped bales. A spear on a front end loader while an excellent tool for moving dry hay bales, is not a good tool for moving wrapped silage bales. The hole in the plastic caused by the spear can be patched, but almost always results in large amounts of spoiled silage near the patched hole. Two types of bale-handling equipment that move silage bales without puncturing holes in the plastic are shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Two types of bale-handling equipment.

Bale Storing

- Once bales have been wrapped and carefully moved to the storage area, the threat of holes in the plastic is not eliminated. Birds cause small holes by walking on or pecking the bales. At night, raccoons like to run across the tops of bales when playing; their claws can puncture holes in the wrapper. The bale storage area should be located where wildlife activity is less likely, and must be fenced to prevent cattle or other large animals from damaging the plastic. Still, bales should be periodically inspected for holes and patched with tape.
- Lastly, the longer the storage time, the more problems with holes in the wrapper and consequent silage spoilage. Small holes develop over time and the spoilage from air exposure causes the silage to mold. Wrapping the bale with 6 layers of plastic (instead of 4) is suggested for silage stored for 6 or more months, or in situations where holes or punctures will likely be a problem. Experience to date has shown that bales should not be stored longer than 6 to 9 months.