

SOUTH DAKOTA– SDSU Studies Net Wrap Accumulation in Cows

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South Dakota researchers continue to measure the benefits of perennial and annual forage crops as well as other forage-related projects across the state. Extension Cow/Calf Field Specialist Adele Harty recently evaluated ruminal net-wrap accumulation in cows fed ground hay. The objective was to determine how rapidly net-wrap accumulation occurs in the rumen when hay is ground without net-wrap removal.

The study began November 2019, using six ruminally cannulated cows based at the SDSU Cottonwood Field Station. A 12 cm x 12 cm piece of net wrap was placed into the rumen of three cows to determine if it will build up more rapidly when there is a larger piece in the rumen to “catch” other pieces. Cows were individually limit-fed ground hay to maintain body condition throughout mid- and late-gestation until all cows had calved, ~5 months. At the end of the feeding period, complete rumen evacuations were conducted to determine net-wrap accumulation. Final data has not been analyzed, but a significant amount of net wrap was removed. Based on the amount of feed each cow received and the weight of the net wrap per ton of feed, the cows consumed ~1.2-2 lbs of net wrap during the feeding period. When net wrap gets tangled with other digesta, it becomes a large ball that may be of concern for cow health. Net-wrap accumulation will be compared to quantity of net wrap in ground hay. There are plans to repeat this project this fall.

