



SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION

Hay

Sometimes in his anxiety to get his crop of hay into the mow, before it is properly cured, especially if it contains clover or alfalfa, or while it is in a wet condition, the farmer is willing to take a chance with the inviolable laws of nature—hoping that it will not heat.

The high prices of fodder and a bumper crop of hay are contributing factors to the increase in fire waste from spontaneous combustion. The former necessitating the placing of hay in the barn and other buildings, and the latter requiring the filling of all available space to the limit—resulting too often in lack of proper ventilation and sometimes storing hay in buildings with leaky roofs or with openings not protected from the weather.

Greater care should be exercised in the curing of hay and more attention should be given to the proper ventilation of the stack, barn or other building in which it is stored.

Horses and cattle do not like to eat hay that has heated or is mildewed.

Sweating Hay

It is an acknowledged fact that combustion will take place in hay not well cured, and is the cause of many barn fires.

Hay or straw when thoroughly dried but which later become wet, will, if densely packed, be liable to ignite spontaneously just the same as if it were densely packed without having been thoroughly dried.

What is Spontaneous Combustion?

Spontaneous combustion may be explained as the ignition of a body by the internal development of heat without the action of an external agent. It frequently takes place in oily waste or heaps of rags, wool or cotton soaked with oil; and in piles of coal, especially fine, soft coal. In the case of oily waste it is caused by the rapid spontaneous oxidation of oil, which raises the temperature sufficiently to make it burst into flame.

Why Hay Heats

In hay the cells continue to live and breathe for sometime after it is cut, and they alone in a close mow, heat the hay to a temperature of 132 deg. F. Added to this is the heat from the microscopic spores of fungi which continue to grow in the blades of hay during the period of fermentation. There is also the heat generated by the development of the hay seeds, the alfalfa, or the clover, together with the heat of the sun upon the roof and sides of the building.