

Forage Testing Hay



Hay season is starting to wind down. As the season wraps up, hay is being hauled, equipment cleaned and put away until next time. One procedure you don't want to forget about is forage sampling your hay. Sampling the hay will provide you with a picture of feed quality, which in turn helps you determine the quality of hay you are selling or feeding to your own animals.

Proper sampling procedures are necessary to accurately assess forage quality. Forage analysis results are only as good as the sample submitted. When collecting a sample, the sample should accurately reflect leaf-stem ratio, legume/grass mix, and weeds present in a particular location within the same cutting.

Here are the steps to sampling:

- 1) Hay Probe – a hay probe is the best method to collecting a good core sample. If you don't have one, one can be checked out from the Extension Office.
- 2) Sample by Lot – Every field and every cutting is different. Don't mix samples from different fields and different cuttings. Make sure you label your samples and keep a record.
- 3) Taking a sample – Take at least 20 core samples from widely separated bales or stacks. Core samples should be taken 12"-15" deep from the center of the end of the bale if collecting from square bales. If collecting samples from large rounds, collect them from the center of the bale. Mix the samples together and then place in a clean, gallon, clear plastic bag. Seal the bag tightly.
- 4) Ship samples immediately – collect samples and bring to the Extension Office the same day. It's best to bring the samples earlier in the week so they don't sit in a postage center over the weekend.



If you would like more information on proper hay sampling, visit www.butler.ksu.edu/agriculture/ or call our office at (316) 321-9660.