



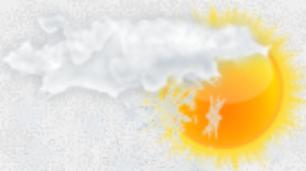
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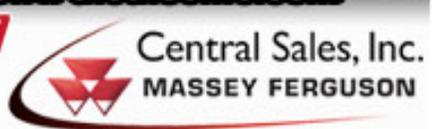
BeefTalk: Know your costs when buying hay for energy

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After counting cows and all the other livestock requiring feed for the winter, many producers may find themselves short of hay. The producers will need to sell some stock or buy some hay.

Recently North Dakota State University extension veterinarian Charlie Stoltenow made three points about proper feeding -- and those comments need to be constantly reinforced.

First, make sure animals receive adequate feed and water; the key is to provide enough energy. Second, severe cold-weather health-related problems or death primarily occur in cattle that are already debilitated. Third, producers who practice point 1 seldom get to point 2.

Over the years, most producers who find themselves with difficult management scenarios were short on feed during the winter feeding months. The solution, selling stock or buying feed, is a much more reasonable solution than hunting bacteria, viruses or other micro-organisms in dead calves. If you want to hunt, just buy a regular hunting license.

Recently, the Dickinson Research Extension Center sold an additional 13 bred heifers and six calves so the current inventory is 392 cows, 27 bulls and 85 calves (and, of course, our horses).

We expect to feed 3 tons of hay for mature cattle and 2 tons for calves. Given these numbers, the DREC needs 1,427 tons of hay for a full winter. Yes, it is possible to substitute grain concentrates, but these numbers are for inventory, not ration, calculations.

This is a discussion of energy, but don't neglect protein and other nutrients when balancing the ration. Each year the Center contacts hay producers and asks for the price delivered to the ranch and a feed analysis for the hay being offered for sale. In general, the price is always given; however, the analysis is often not provided. The Center does not purchase hay without an analysis, but all the hay offered is always sold somewhere, with or without an analysis.

There seems to be a misconception that hay is just hay when feeding beef cows. That is not true.

In a review of last year's hay bids in preparation for this year's bidding, the following were the

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values for hay presented for sale. The lowest bid was for CRP-type hay at \$38 per bulk ton. Based on feed analysis, the energy in this hay cost \$68 per ton of TDN (energy). Last year, the Center received several bids in the affordable range of mid \$30 to mid \$40 per ton delivered and the price per ton of TDN ranged from \$68 to \$87. There was more price variation per ton of TDN (energy) than price per ton of bulk hay.

The competition from other feeds is the reason for the cutoff at \$45 per ton of bulk hay. Last year, the center could buy corn at \$89 per ton of TDN (energy). So why bid over what semi loads of corn would cost? Generally, a producer could pay \$45 per ton bulk for hay with an analysis of 50 percent TDN and still be at \$90 per ton of TDN, the upper limit compared to corn.

If all the bids were included, i.e., those above \$45 per ton of bulk hay, the range was even greater. For example, the highest bid for CRP-type hay was \$50 per ton, or \$100 per ton of TDN (energy). The most expensive hay was at \$60 per ton of bulk alfalfa/grass hay or \$124 per ton of TDN (energy).

Cattle need hay; however, you need profit. Do not over-price beef-quality hay when compared to corn, and do not contract hay without an analysis. Moderately priced hay with a poor analysis can be very expensive when fed.

This is your opportunity, as Charlie Stoltenow said, to not create our own problems. Now is the time to price this year's hay.

May you find all your ear tags.

(Your comments are always welcome at www.BeefTalk.com For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to www.CHAPS2000.COM on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0020.)

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December Cover Photo

Julie and Cal Hoff recently were honored at the NDSU Harvest Bowl as outstanding agriculturists in Stark County. The couple farms north of Ric...

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