



New Mexico State University

Extension Plant Sciences

Alfalfa Market News

New Mexico Hay Association, www.nmhay.com

New Mexico State University

Cooperative Extension Service

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Hay Prices for New Mexico

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County	Contact	Premium Hay (\$/ton)	Top Quality Hay (\$/ton)	Other Hay (\$/ton)	Cut Complete	Market Activity
Chaves	Grower	\$165-210	>\$165	\$130	Most of 4th	Strong/active Tight supplies
Eddy	Woods Houghton, County Agent	\$160; \$170-180 small bale	\$150; 160-170 small bale	\$110-150, light to heavy stripe	Most of 4 th , some 5 th	Short supply on premium
Grant	Pete Walden, County Agent	\$160	\$140	\$120	5 th cutting	Steady
Hidalgo	Christy Rubio, County Agent	\$151	\$151, \$5.50 custom baled	\$110 (oat)	Most of 4th	Slow due to moisture
Lea	Wayne Cox, County Agent	\$190-200, \$15/ac custom baled	\$180-185	\$165 and up	3 rd 100%, 4 th 65%, 5 th 20%	Solid/active
Roosevelt	Patrick Kircher, County Agent	\$180	\$160-165	\$150	4 th cutting	Slow to steady
San Juan	Gary Hathorn, County Agent	\$180-190	\$150-180	\$135-150	2 nd 95% 3 rd 50%	Good

Roundup Ready Alfalfa Update

Leonard Lauriault, NMSU Forage Agronomist, ASC at Tucumcari

Much has been published in the popular press regarding RRA, some of it misleading, being heavily biased, and some not. Anyone having anything to do with alfalfa, whether Roundup Ready or not, as a grower, custom harvester, transporter, seller, or end user should be aware of the current status of RRA and its effects on everyone associated with alfalfa. The purpose of this article is to provide some very basic information in that regard, including websites where more detailed information can be found, beginning with background information about the current regulated status of RRA (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/alfalfa.shtml>), a summary of which follows.

In June 2005 the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) deregulated RRA. A lawsuit filed in California led to a preliminary injunction on March 12, 2007, that immediately re-regulated RRA and prohibited any future sale of RRA seed as well as the planting of any already acquired seed after March 30, 2007. The lawsuit was filed against APHIS because APHIS had determined that an environmental impact statement (EIS) was not needed for deregulation and only prepared an environmental assessment. The court deemed this a violation of a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirement to take a "hard look" at potential environmental effects of genetically engineered plants prior to deregulation.

The preliminary injunction became permanent on May 3 requiring permits for future plantings and directing APHIS to develop conditions under which already planted RRA can be harvested for forage and seed. Locations of all known RRA seed fields and counties in which RRA is being grown for forage also must be published (http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/alfalfa_locations.shtml).

An Administrative Order prepared by APHIS outlining mandatory guidelines for harvesting, storing, transporting, and selling RRA was issued by APHIS (http://www.aphis.usda.gov/brs/pdf/RRA_A4_final.pdf) that was included in an amended order to permanent injunction on July 23. The permanent injunction and amended order will remain in effect until the EIS is prepared and approved, which estimated could take approximately two years.

As growers are identified, they will be officially notified about the court order and the guidelines; however, anyone having anything to do with alfalfa, whether Roundup Ready or not, should review the Administrative Order and Roundup Ready Alfalfa Production Guidelines for themselves without waiting for any official notice. Here is a summary of the hay production guidelines (see the website for guidelines regarding seed harvesting operations).


First, no pollinators can be released into an RRA fields grown for forage (hay or silage). Second, forage harvesting equipment (hay or silage) can be dedicated to the harvest of RRA only and so labeled with no cleaning requirement. Otherwise, equipment to be used in RRA and conventional alfalfa fields must be properly cleaned before leaving the RRA field. For all forage equipment, including flatbeds of trucks, trailers, wagons, and stacking equipment, in addition to harvesting equipment, cleaning involves sweeping, blowing with forced air, or washing external parts. When using square balers, the first three bales dropped in the non-RRA field are considered to be contaminated and must either be stored with RRA or destroyed. I have a question in to APHIS as to whether the three bale rule also applies to large square balers. Round balers are considered clean when they are swept, blown off, or washed after the last bale, however partial, is tied and ejected in the RRA field to clear the bale chamber. An alternative to the cleanout procedure is to declare and handle all alfalfa on the farm, including non-RRA, as RRA.

RRA hay having viable seed must be covered with a secure tarp during transport. Sweepings from equipment used for hauling RRA hay must be left at the final destination of unloading. RRA hay or silage stored anywhere other than at the field where it was grown must be separated from non-RRA forage and labeled. Bales of RRA that leave the farm where they were grown must be individually tagged with the wording, "Roundup Ready Alfalfa," and must be used for animal feed only. The end user may commingle RRA and non-RRA at feeding time, if desired.

The prohibition on planting RRA also may affect seed availability for the next couple of years. Consequently, for planting in 2008 and 2009, you should order seed early, preferably in the spring to be delivered just in time for late summer and early fall plantings (you should be doing this anyway). Additionally, don't hoard seed by buying your seed for 2009 in 2007 or 2008. There are several good reasons for not hoarding seed.

First, hoarding seed will make supplies even shorter in the second year. Second, seed germination and seedling vigor may decline. Reduced vigor will be evident after planting as seedlings die from the rigors of germination and emergence or winter conditions. Third, seed treatments will lose efficacy. Seed inoculant, in particular, does not store well in hot environments. Seed kept for more than a couple of months in some areas of New Mexico may need to be re-inoculated prior to planting – an added expense and inconvenience you don't need to experience. Fourth, if you buy your seed too early, you'll have spent your seed money and who knows but that the requirements for deregulation of RRA might be met early or another conventional variety may be released that's better than what you bought that's now a year old and needs to be retreated. Because guidelines are in place for harvesting RRA seed you can bet that seed may well be harvested during the injunction period from the 20,000 acres of RRA seed fields already established. That seed could become readily available as soon as the injunction is lifted.

When it comes to the current status Roundup Ready alfalfa and its affect on all alfalfa, the more you know, the better. Be sure to review the web pages cited here for yourself so you'll know what your rights and responsibilities are regarding Roundup Ready alfalfa, as a grower, possible harvester, possible hauler, or possible user. For questions about alfalfa establishment or management, including the Roundup Ready injunction, call your County Cooperative Extension Service Office.

 Mark Marsalis, Extension Agronomist—New Mexico State University is an equal opportunity employer. All programs are available to everyone regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap or national origin, New Mexico State University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

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