New Mexico State University

Extension Plant Sciences

Alfalfa Market News

New Mexico Hay Association, www.nmhay.com

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Hay Prices for New Mexico | **Volume 6, Issue 8** | **September 18, 2007**

County	Contact	Premium Hay ($/ton)	Top Quality Hay ($/ton)	Other Hay ($/ton)	Cut Complete	Market Activity
Chaves	Grower	$165-210	>$165	$130	Most of 5th cutting	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 5th	Short supply on premium
Hidalgo	Christy Rubio, County Agent	$151	$151, $5.50 custom baled	$110 (oat)	Most of 5th	Slow
Lea	Wayne Cox, County Agent	$190-200, $15/ac custom baled	$180-185	$165 and up	4th 100%, Most of 5th	Solid/active
Roosevelt	Patrick Kircher, County Agent	$180	$160-165	$150	Most of 5th	Slow to steady
San Juan	Gary Hathorn, County Agent	$180-190	$150-180	$135-150	3rd 95% 4th 50%	Good

Managing Last Cuts of Alfalfa

Mark Marsalis, NMSU Extension Agronomist, ASC at Clovis

As the alfalfa growing season starts to wind down, it is important for growers to understand how the last cuttings of their stands may affect winter survival and yields in subsequent years. Some growers may choose to have a frequent cutting interval during spring and summer in order to maximize forage quality of the hay. Others may choose to wait a little longer (first flower to 25% flower) between cuttings to improve stand persistence and longevity. Whichever the case, proper fall management is critical for future productivity. Alfalfa must build root reserves prior to going into the winter, and cutting at frequent intervals and at certain times in the fall can reduce plant persistence and yield the following spring. Longer intervals should be allowed for late season cuttings for root reserve accumulation. In fall, either of two approaches should be taken: 1) alfalfa may be cut so early that enough regrowth occurs to replenish root carbohydrate reserves prior to first frost (in this case, a late cutting may occur at or just after a dormancy-inducing frost which means little or no regrowth or 'waste' of stored carbohydrates will occur) *or* 2) it should be cut so late that regrowth is minimal enough to not exhaust root reserves before freezing. General recommendations for fall management are to let plants rest for 6 to 8 weeks between the last regular harvest and the first frost (27°F for 4 hrs). The 6 weeks leading up to first frost is critical to plant survival. Depending on when the first frost date is for your area and when harvests began in the spring, this rest period may be necessary for either the 5th or 6th cutting. The detrimental effect of a fall harvesting is lessened if regular cuttings earlier in the year are less frequent.

Also, leaving a 6-inch stubble will help insulate the soil and protect plants. Alfalfa producers thinking of making a late harvest should consider their need for extra forage and market demand contrasted with the possible risk of losing part of the alfalfa stand due to winterkill. In areas where winter temperatures may warm enough to break dormancy, less dormant alfalfas may grow only to get shut down by a freeze and this, too, wastes stored carbohydrates and is a reason to be cautious about planting less dormant alfalfas—even if they are winter hardy—because this process is not desirable for the alfalfa stand. Factors that increase the risk of winter injury are: stand > 3 yrs old, variety with high winterhardiness rating, low soil fertility – particularly potassium (K), poor soil drainage/excessively wet soil, fall cutting at inappropriate time.

Hay Quality vs. Price

Dan Putnam, Extension Specialist, Univ. of Calif., Davis
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Excerpt from: The Future of Alfalfa Forage Quality Testing in Hay Markets. *In*: Proc. Western Alfalfa and Forage Conference. 2006. Reno, NV.

Figure 1. Idealized relationship between fiber value and price, observed behavior, California markets. At high fiber values, hay value is not dependent upon lab tests, but other factors (weeds, mold) are more important. At very low fiber values, little gain in value per unit fiber is seen. A critical area of concern is the 'cutoff' between dairy quality and non-dairy hay (linear portion), where small differences in fiber result in large price differences and where there is the most abuse of the fiber-marketing system. This is the region where additional analyses should assist marketers. The absolute values of Price (Y axis) and Fiber (X axis) may shift from year to year or by market.

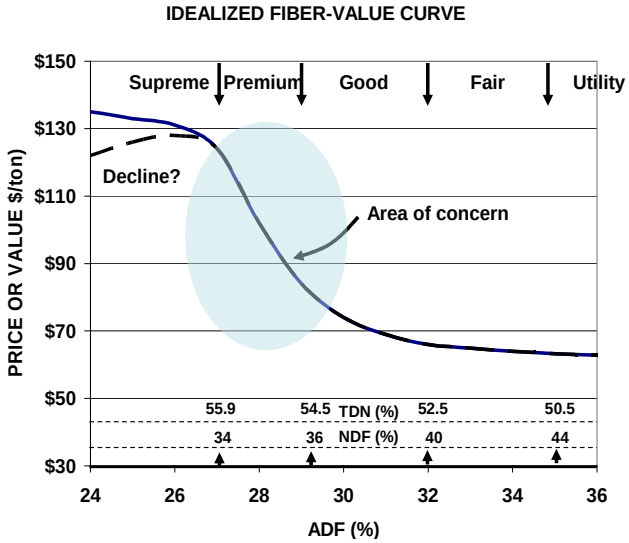

Figure 1. Relationship of fiber and energy values and price received for alfalfa hay.

We Need Your Input !

In the interest of providing you with the most relevant and useable information for your haying and marketing operations, we are requesting your input into this monthly publication. We would like to know what type of topics and issues you desire to see covered in the Alfalfa Market News. New Mexico State University will continue to work with the NM Hay Association to provide valuable service to alfalfa growers and marketers throughout the state. This publication is just one effort toward that end. If you have comments on how we can improve the newsletter, please send them to Mark Marsalis, Agricultural Science Center at Clovis, 2346 SR 288, Clovis, NM 88101, or at marsalis@nmsu.edu.

Mark Marsalis, 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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