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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Hay Purchases and Feeding

Recently I was in a meeting when a guy came to the meeting a little late and stated he have just been able to sell some hay. For those selling hay, this has not been a good winter/spring. The early green up has seen livestock out picking and grazing more. The hay consumption is less than it was a few weeks ago, and this was not a terrible winter. January was extremely wet and caused muddy conditions earlier than normal, but February was nicer than normal. All said and done, there was more hay available going into the hay feeding season and consumption was less than normal. The result is many producers with lots of hay leftover. Supply and demand kicks in and over supply causes cheaper prices.

When buying hay there are some basic things to consider. The quality of the hay should always be considered, and the only accurate way to know is by pulling samples and having it tested. A sample from 10 round bales should give a decent evaluation of the quality. Things that can be a factor are what is in the bale. Is it grass, a legume or weeds? The earlier it is harvested the better chance it is of higher quality. Grasses and legumes have much higher feed value when they are not yet mature. One the plant starts to produce seeds the quality decreases. Another plus to an early harvest is the less percentage of weeds. Most have fields will become more polluted with weeds the longer into the summer we get. Once the weeds go to seed the problem just grows. If you are buying hay you do not want to be buying weeds for feed, but you really do not want to bring in the weed seeds.

Another issue that needs to be considered is the size of the bales. There is a huge difference in the amount of hay in a 5 x 6 bale (roll) and a 4 x 4. In fact, there is more than twice as much hay in a 5 x 6 in this case. I have discussed the amount of hay in a roll comparing the different sizes of bales. The amount of hay can be calculated by using the formula for a cylinder.

I tried to put the formula in here as it is written, but I can't figure out how to do that so I am just going to say it. The volume is equal to Pi (3.14) multiplied by the radius squared (half of the diameter) squared multiplied by the height. So, for a 4 x 4 bale the math would be 3.14 times 2 squared, which is 4 (the radius) times 4 for the height. 3.14 x 4 x 4 = 50.24

4 x 4 is approximately 50.24 cubic feet
4 x 5 is approximately 62.83 cubic feet
5 x 4 is approximately 78.54 cubic feet
5 x 5 is approximately 98.17 cubic feet
5 x 6 is approximately 117.81 cubic feet

If you go to google and pull up the formula this math is easy. You just plug in the numbers, as I just did.

Keep in mind, there are other factors for how much hay is in a bale. The density can cause some variable amounts. That can be caused by how tight the bales are rolled or the forage being rolled. First cutting, long stemmed grass hay will not be as dense as second cutting grass or alfalfa. This will give you an idea, but a set of scales may be the best.

Other factors for buying or selling hay include how it is stored. Hay stored in a barn vs. outside can be huge. Not as much if the bales are wrapped with net vs. string. Speaking of net and strings on hay. The traditional twine will rot away fairly quick. However, if you are feeding hay with the nylon string or net it is best to cut that stuff off before feeding the hay. Trust me, that is a mess you do not want to deal with. It does not rot, it gets caught up in equipment like manure spreaders, bush hogs and tillage equipment. In addition to those problems it can cause issues in the digestive system for livestock. Cut it off and dispose of it properly.

Dates to Remember

May 8	Pesticide Testing at the Old Y Restaurant at noon. Must pre-register at http://pested.osu.edu or call 800-282-1955. As always, this test is offered on the second Monday of each month.