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 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Dealing with a Short Hay Supply

Last week I talked to someone who recently had a farm sale. He sold all of his equipment for both making and feeding hay. He also sold some hay. When he told me about the auction, it was the price of the hay that got my attention. I have thought hay was going to most likely be in short supply this year. I know several people had fed out everything last year, and many of those same producers were concerned early in the summer that they were going to be short. I know the number of bales I normally get, and my numbers were below normal.

I have talked about quality, or the lack thereof, in this year's hay. Most samples are showing low protein levels and low TDN (Total Digestible Nutrients) which is basically "energy". The protein is needed, but many look at that level as the only indicator. During the cold and muddy winter, energy is most likely the number one concern.

I talked about limit feeding some last year. This is something that I did some last year. Many producers have a feed pad and it works well for limit feeding. In fact, you may be able to utilize a smaller feed pad for more cows with limit feeding. If you have a way of doing so, you can use the feed pad for more than one group of cattle by limiting each group to part of the day.

As far as the time it takes, it does not really take much time. I know my hay is not enough to meet the nutritional needs of my cows, so I supplement with some concentrated feed. I have the feed bunks lined along the end and one side of the feed pad which is concrete.

In the morning I feed the group that was on the pad overnight. Once they eat the concentrate they tend to go to water, making it pretty easy to get them off of the pad. I shut one gate, go to the other end of the pad and open another gate, letting the other group have access to the hay during the day. I then feed them the supplemental feed in the evening and run them out.

I have one place that has 4 hay rings that allows nearly 90 head to eat per day by limiting their access. Last year, I did the same thing. I have other groups, smaller groups, on other farms that have access to hay 24/7 and no feed pad. The cattle are fed about the same amount supplement. The cattle on the feed pad, limited feeding time, was the best performing group by far last year. The mud is also a factor. Less mud in fields with a feed pad. Tractors do much of the damage.

Here is more from www.thebeefblog.com about limited feeding that appeared in December 6 Beef Blog. This is from Mark Hilton and The Beef Magazine.

Limit-feeding cows - Fifty years ago, beef cows were fed a finite amount of hay, typically delivered via small square bales. The number of cows was known, and the amount of hay they needed each day was calculated. Currently, a common way to feed cows is to allow 24/7 access to round bales of hay.



Therefore, 50 years ago, the owner was in charge of how much hay the cows received, and now the cows are in charge of how much hay is used. That might not seem like progress.

Research at Purdue showed that cows that had access to hay for only four or eight hours per day had 37% and 18% less hay disappearance, respectively, compared to cows with 24/7 access to hay — with no difference in cow weight change. Unlimited access to hay is almost never the most cost-effective ration.

In a situation where very high-quality hay is being fed, it is possible that access of four hours per head per day could provide all the energy and protein for a third-trimester cow. It is also possible that this same cow could be fed a more average-quality hay where eight hours per cow per day would be needed.

The key is to always test the hay for nutrient quality; and have your nutrition company sale representative, nutritionist, Extension beef specialist or veterinarian help to determine the ideal ration for your cows.

In much of the Midwest, there was a very wet spring, and first-cutting hay was harvested significantly later than normal. Overmature hay will likely be lower in energy and protein, and this hay will need to be supplemented with energy and protein. Testing hay now will pay huge dividends in your herd's nutritional status.

Economics of limit-feeding hay - If a 1,400-pound cow needs to consume 2.5% of her body weight in hay each day (35 pounds) and 24/7 access to hay results in a 28% hay wastage (10 pounds), that 10 pounds of hay can be saved every day. In a herd of 100 cows fed for 150 days during the winter where you limit access to six hours per day, your total hay savings per year is 75 tons. At \$100 per ton, that is a savings of \$7,500 per year.

If hay supply is short, you can program cows to spend less time eating hay and supplement them more. The same Purdue study mentioned above showed that cows will consume about 10 pounds of hay in one hour, around 16 pounds after two hours and around 25 pounds after four hours.

These times are based on average-quality hay, and as stated earlier, having hay tested and using a trusted adviser to help balance the ration is always recommended. As an example, cows could be allowed two hours' access to average-quality hay and fed 8.5 pounds of dried distillers grain per head per day to supply the cow's energy and protein needs. Another advantage of this system is that the salt-mineral-vitamin mix can be topdressed onto the concentrate or coproduct feed.

This gives a much more uniform consumption of this product versus being fed free choice. To save an additional 5% to 10% of your hay, an ionophore should be included in the ration.

When asked, 100% of beef producers who have built hay pads and now use time feeding of cows say they would never go back to feeding in the mud or giving 24/7 access to hay. In fact, the most common response is, "I should have done this years ago!"

Pesticide Re-certification

The Adams County Re-certification will include Fertilizer and Pesticide on Thursday January 9 at Frisch's in West Union. YOU MUST pre-register by calling Barbie at the OSU Extension Office and

there will be a fee of \$10 for Fertilizer only, and \$35 for Pesticide including Fertilizer. Call the office at 544-2339 or stop by at the Adams County Government Annex to register.

Other locations and dates in surrounding counties include:

OSU South Centers on December 19 beginning at 5:00 p.m. call 740-354-7879

Highland County Extension Office on Jan. 15, in Hillsboro starting at noon, call 393-1918

Brown County Fairgrounds on March 19 at 5:30 p.m., call 378-6716

Dates to Remember

- Dec. 14 Adams Co. Steer Tag-In at Adams Co. Fairgrounds 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
- Dec. 16 Pesticide and Fertilizer Certification Exams for Private and Commercial Applicators at the Old Y Restaurant at noon. In January we will go back to the normal exam dates on the second Monday of each month.
- Jan. 9 Pesticide Re-certification at Frisch's. You must pre-register at 544-2339.