

BUYING AND SELLING ALFALFA HAY ON THE BASIS OF A CHEMICAL ANALYSIS-SUMMARY

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It is very evident from the presentations of the previous panel members that there are different viewpoints on hay testing, depending on whether you are buying or selling. However, there are some things on which almost everyone agrees. These are:

- There is a large amount of alfalfa hay produced in California (almost 7 million tons in 1974).
2. About 70% of the alfalfa hay produced in California is fed to dairy cattle.
 3. Dairy cows fed high-quality alfalfa hay (low-fiber, high-protein) eat more hay, waste less, produce more milk, and are more profitable.
 4. Alfalfa hay yields are less, there are more weeds, and stand life is shortened when alfalfa is continually cut at the immature stage which results in low-fiber, high-protein hay.
 5. The hay grower who produces a superior product should be rewarded for his efforts by receiving a premium price for his hay.
 6. Hay growers and dairymen are human. Hay growers don't want to sell their hay for a nickel less than they have to and dairymen don't want to pay a nickel more than they have to.

What is the solution to the problem? If there were an easy solution, it probably would have been put forth before now. Maybe one thing that bears consideration is more communication and cooperation between hay growers and dairymen. The following example may be a starting point for discussion of the mutual problems between the interdependent California alfalfa and dairy industries:

A dairyman locates a hay grower who is willing to produce hay according to a predetermined set of standards mutually agreed upon. Let's take the standards outlined by Joe Duarte in his earlier presentation. For hay that has 22% modified crude fiber (54% TDN) at 10% moisture, they agree on a certain price per ton. The dairyman agrees to take all of the hay produced which tests between 18-22% MCF. If the hay has less than 22% MCF, the dairyman pays a premium. Let's say they agree on a premium, in this case, of \$1.50 per ton for each percentage less than 22% MCF. On the other hand, the hay grower will receive \$1.50 per ton less for each percentage above 22% MCF. In some cases, the dairyman may want the option of refusing hay which does not meet the mutually agreed upon standards.

This plan may be somewhat idealistic compared to the horse-trading atmosphere that is typical of present hay marketing practices. However, a plan such as this might encourage production of more high-quality hay for those dairymen who are willing to pay a premium for it. The system would reward the hay grower that produced a superior product, and penalize the hay grower that produces a poorer product. Both the progressive dairyman and progressive hay grower would benefit. Additionally, the hay grower would have a guaranteed sale of his hay without the hassle of present marketing methods. Maybe dairymen and hay growers should look into a system such as this as a possible means of putting hay marketing on a more reasonable and equitable basis than presently is the case.