

Approaches to Developing Marketing Strategies: The InterMountain Hay Growers Association

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Abstract

The InterMountain Hay Growers Association is a grower-friendly organization that helps growers grow more quality hay and helps buyers buy the hay to meet their needs. The organization enjoys universal membership in Northeastern California; growers may join as full members and supporters of the industry, equipment dealers, suppliers, chemical companies, and brokers may join as associate members.

Key Words: marketing, alfalfa, hay, haygrower organization

Origin The InterMountain Hay Growers Association was formed in 1979 by a group of hay growers concerned about low erratic hay prices in Northeastern California. Several growers met on a weekly basis to write the original constitution and bylaws for the non-profit organization. The first activities consisted of monthly meetings, monthly newsletters and an annual field day. The organization was financed by yearly dues of \$20.

Membership Original members came primarily from the Fall River and Big Valley areas of Eastern Shasta and Western Lassen Counties. In the 1980's haygrowers from throughout Northeastern California were encouraged to join. In the 1990's associate, non-producer and haybroker, members were encouraged to join. Dues for growers are \$30 per calendar year and for associate members are \$40 per calendar year. The total annual membership is between 100 and 150.

Leadership The leadership of the organization comes from an annually elected president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer and a 14 member board of directors elected for 2-year terms. Half of the board is elected each year and the vice-president usually succeeds the president. The board meets monthly in the winter months and bi-monthly in the summer months.

Objectives The declared objectives of the organization are to improve income to members through education. The organization does not market hay collectively.

Methods used to achieve objectives The InterMountain Hay Growers accomplish their objectives through educational activities; including field days, horse hay seminars, literature, haybuyer dinners, monthly meetings and an annual meeting.

Activities Association activities include monthly meetings with speakers, at least six newsletters per year, and an Annual Meeting held in January. The bimonthly newsletter highlights hay prices in Northeastern California, alerting growers of market shifts and trends. Since 1985 the Association has annually produced a grower directory which highlights members' names, addresses and "Sources Of Hay For All Needs". In 1993 the Association established a "Hay Weather Line" connecting the National Weather Service to growers who call (916) 221-8060. The weather line lists rain potential, dew potential and crop water use in Northeastern California. Also in 1993 the Association called for the 1st Annual Hay Summit meeting. In 1994 a California Hay Contest was held in conjunction with the

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popular "McArthur Hay Days" at the InterMountain Fairgrounds in McArthur some 75 miles east of Redding on Hwy 299. The winners of the California Hay Contest were named "Hay Champions" and given beautiful color signs for prominent display in farm driveways for hay buyers to view. Also in 1994, a hay buyer dinner was held to attract new hay buyers to the InterMountain area. The entire list of California's 3,600 dairies, hay brokers and hay buyers was put onto an electronic database(dBase IV format) and made available to members seeking new hay sales outlets. The Association has also worked closely with the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Market News Service to improve and expand the Hay Market News Service.

Accomplishments The InterMountain Hay Growers Association successfully links the hay growers throughout Northeastern California providing information which improves hay income; market news, technology and weather. The Association was instrumental in organizing the 1st Annual Western Hay Summit in 1993 and beginning the California Hay Contest in 1994. Their grower directory now has a color cover and is available either at hay scales throughout Northeastern California and by mail at no charge from the Association. Simply write to InterMountain Hay Growers Association at P.O. Box 66, McArthur CA 96056 or call (916) 336-5784 for a free copy of the informative directory.

Future Plans In 1995 the grower directory will have a color cover. Also in 1995, the newsletter will have an improved, more attractive, desktop-published look. The California Hay Contest will be continued and improved.