ALFALFA IN OUR HORSE OPERATION

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"There's nothing better for the inside of man than the outside of a horse and there's nothing better for the inside of a horse than alfalfa hay".

Our operation consists of approximately 500 acres of rolling clay land. We lease an additional 100+ acres for alfalfa and other hay production. Our rotational program includes corn, soybeans, wheat, oats followed by either red clover-orchardgrass or alfalfa-orchardgrass for hay and pasture.

Our livestock operation includes 70 crossbred beef cows, using Angus, Brahman and Simbra bulls on a cooperative breeding project with the University of Kentucky.

Our horse operation includes a Quarter Horse Stallion, Smokey Leo Bars, 15 Quarter Horse and T.B. mares, along with approximately 15 young horses in training or for sale.

The total operation is based upon our forage program. Quality pasture and hay production are essential to our cattle and horse operation, and to our cash flow. We have a slogan on the farm for our hay production, "We sell the very best and feed the rest". We are fortunate to have an outlet for all our forage produced.

Our top quality hay goes for cash sale. We feed large amounts of alfalfa-grass hay to our horse herd. Some of the lesser quality goes to the background calves and beef cows. We also roll hay that is rained on and much of the excess pasture clippings and clover-grass hay.

It is my opinion that alfalfa or alfalfa-grass hay production is the most dependable and best cash crop in Kentucky for the following reasons:

1) Multiple year production from single seeding and land preparation which lowers labor and yearly establishing cost of other cash crops.

2) Quality alfalfa hay has a variety of large, local markets i.e. horse, dairy and beef cattle.

3) Quality alfalfa hay has a consistent value, price and demand.

4) Can command a premium price for high quality hay which is measurable.
5) Quality alfalfa hay produced in Kentucky is closer to many markets in Kentucky and Southeastern U.S. market.

6) Protects land from erosion and is drought resistant.

7) Little or no nitrogen purchase.

8) Utilization of land less suitable for continuous row crops.

9) Opportunity for year round marketing.

10) There is a shortage of high quality alfalfa-alfalfa grass hay on market.

11) Excellent marketing systems is KPHGA.

   a) guarantee payment
   b) association makes arrangements with buyer-seller and transportation
   c) handle advertising
   d) very reasonable cost

12) Fluctuating grain prices and current low prices.

What are some of our limiting factors in producing quality alfalfa hay:

1) labor

2) weather - severe drought in 4 of last 6 years in our area

3) weather predictions

4) adequate, appropriate, affordable storage space

5) land preparation, seeding is expensive and difficult because of rocky soil

6) reasonably priced, quality, automated equipment, ie. bale wagon

7) consistency of quality and quantity hay produced

8) weed-insect control with grass mixtures

9) financial and physical restrictions

10) other
Summary

We fertilize and lime to soil test including minor elements. We cut on 4½-5½ week intervals, use a tedder, rake and bale to conserve leaves, eliminate mold, dust and sun damage, storage in a dry, well-ventilated barn on pallets, test representative samples, check each bale as it is loaded and attempt to represent the hay as it is to build repeat customers. We want to produce high testing hay with green color, palatable, soft, sweet smelling and marketable. We believe the opportunities are unlimited for alfalfa hay production and marketing.