

Hay Testing and Marketing Update
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Hay Testing

The hay testing program of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture continues to be actively involved across the state. Presently, there are stationary NIR labs in Frankfort, Glasgow, and Paducah. These labs operate somewhat differently from traditional forage testing labs because, **for the price of analyzing the forage sample (\$10), they will actually come to the farm and sample your hay!** To get your forage analyzed, call the Department of Agriculture in Frankfort at 1-800-248-4628. They will find a convenient time to meet with you at your barn for sampling. The KDA samplers will also rate your hay for several visual characteristics such as leafiness, color, maturity, odor, and so on. In the first 11 months of 1990, KDA has tested 303 samples representing over 9000 tons of Kentucky hay.

One misconception that has surrounded the testing program of the KDA is that you should only utilize this service if you plan to sell your hay. This program is open to all hay producers of Kentucky even if you have no intention of selling the hay. Both KDA and I would like to encourage you to have your hay tested especially if you plan to feed it to your own animals. Having hay tested puts you in position to make informed decisions about your winter feeding program. The forage analysis information can be used to prepare a balanced hay feeding program

that eliminates unnecessary supplement purchases and avoids underfeeding of critical nutrients (energy and protein). Information on interpreting forage analysis reports is available from your county extension office and possibly your local feed dealer. It is very important to realize that this service is open to all Kentucky hay producers, not just hay sellers.

Mobile Lab is Available. As an educational service to Kentuckians, KDA is operating a mobile forage testing van equipped with highly accurate computer-supported NIR forage analysis equipment. The van needs 3 15 or 20 amp circuits of 110/120 volt electricity to support the NIR spectrophotometer, computer, sample preparation equipment, and to regulate the temperature inside the van. [The NIR instrument must be kept at 68 to 75° to give good results.] The van is intended to be used an educational tool at field days, hay days, county fairs, forage meetings, etc. and is housed in Paducah. The van is not designed to make individual farm visits. There is no charge for samples that are run by the van. Look for the van at your local forage extension meeting. If you have a forage educational event planned and would like to utilize the testing van, contact Buddy Sims at 1-800-248-4628. There is not charge for samples analyzed in the van when these are done in conjunction with an educational activity.

Testing Hay with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture

1. Let hay cure for 30 days.
 2. Call KDA in Frankfort at 1-800-248-4628 to set up a testing appointment on your farm.
 3. Meet with KDA representative at your farm.
 4. Pay KDA \$10 per lot of hay sampled.
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Hay Marketing Update

Kentucky Pride Hay Growers Association. Hay marketing in Kentucky takes all forms. Kentucky is unique in that it has a full-time, hay marketing association known as the Kentucky Pride Hay Growers Association (KPHGA). For annual dues of \$25 and a tonnage fee on hay sold, a producer can employ the services of Joe O'Daniel, KPHGA general manager, who will actively seek buyers and arrange transportation for the hay. To be marketed by KPHGA, the hay must be sampled and tested by KDA (see above). KPHGA has constant access to this data and uses the quality and visual information to market hay across the southeastern U.S. This hay association is composed of an executive committee and an 18 member board of directors (Table 1). Ten board members are elected from area hay marketing associations and eight are elected from the state at large. The board appointed six non-voting ex-officio board members to serve as advisors to this producer organization. The Kentucky Pride Hay Growers Association has been selling hay since mid-1989. For more information about KPHGA contact:

Table 1. Officers and board members of the Kentucky Pride Hay Growers Association.

John Nowak, President	
Robert Yount, Vice-President	
Eddie Gilkison, Secretary	
Pete Dotson, Treasurer	
Area Board Members:	
Sam Hayden, Graves Co.	Nicky Baker, Caldwell Co.
Larry Handy, Green Co.	David Simcoe, Hardin Co.
Mike Poynter, Lincoln Co.	Scott Hall, Simpson Co.
David Dick, Bourbon and Montgomery Co.	Warren Richardson, Kenton Co.
Robert Yount, Henry Co.	Eddie Gilkison, Clark Co.
Returning Board Members:	
John Nowak, Christian Co.	Roy Reichenbach, Lincoln Co.
At Large Board Members:	
Williard Greenwell, Union Co.	Ben Crawford, LaRue Co.
Pete Dotson, Warren Co.	Morris Norfleet, Pulaski Co.
Larry Jeffries, Henry Co.	Larry T. Shirley, Barren Co.
Ex-Officio Board Members:	
Dr. Jimmy Henning, UK	Johnny Price, Farm Bureau
Dr. Linda Brown, WKU	Dan Grigson, KFGC
Dwight Grise, Ky Dept. of Ed.	Roger Nesbitt, KDA

Joe O'Daniel
WKU Ag Expo Center
406A Elrod Road
Bowling Green, KY 42101
502-781-7622

Hay Sales. The initiation of the hay testing program of KDA has stimulated hay sales in that each lot of hay sampled and tested is listed in a computerized hay directory. This hay directory is utilized by KPHGA, hay brokers, and individuals to locate hay to buy. Sales of hay from the KDA database for May, 1989 to April, 1990 and from May, 1990 to November 28, 1990 are shown by state in Figure 1. These sales are a compilation of transactions by both KPHGA and individuals. It is clear that Kentucky's hay market is in the southeastern states. In 1898-90, 61% of the 2448 tons sold were moved within Kentucky, compared with 53% for May through November 28, 1990. There seems to be a trend for expansion of out-of-state markets. The total

volume for the 1990-1991 sales year will be considerably much greater than 1989-90. Seven months into the 1990-91 season, hay sales were already almost three times that for all of 1989-90 (7108 vs. 2448).

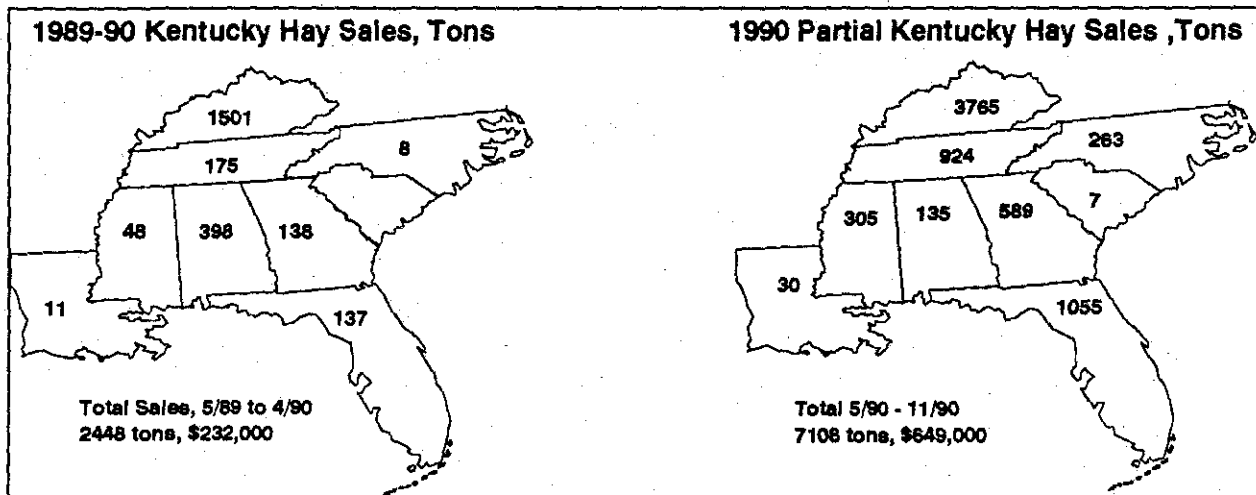


Figure 1. Kentucky hay sale summary by state.

What kind of hay sells? According to Joe O'Daniel, manager of KPHGA, the hay that is easiest to sell contains alfalfa or alfalfa/grass in small, rectangular bales (14X18X36 inches) and tests 17% or greater in crude protein and 124 or more in relative feed value (RFV). [RFV is calculated from fiber values of the hay and is included on all KDA forage analysis reports.] In order to get enough weight on trucks, bales should weigh 50 pounds or more. It is not economical to move light bales over long distances. Hay which is bright green in color, is free of weeds and mold, and is fine-textured and leafy is in demand by horse buyers. Dairy buyers are very quality conscious, often specifying a minimum protein or relative feed value content.

Considerations in hay marketing. If you are considering raising hay to sell, consider the following recommendations:

1. Know your product.

Have your hay tested by a reputable forage analysis laboratory, and know how to interpret the results. Know the terminology used to describe the visual quality of your hay, such as color (bright green, sun-bleached, tobacco-brown, etc.), stem texture (fine, coarse), and smell.

2. Know your market.

The intended market will often affect the agronomic practices you employ on hay fields. Know the specific characteristics that are important to the market you intend to move hay to. For horse buyers, the visual characteristics of color, weediness, moldiness, dustiness, and leaf retention will probably be the most important. Dairy buyers require high quality hay that is high in protein and low in fiber. Some weeds can be tolerated as long as the

quality remains high. Color is much less of an issue with dairy hay. For beef markets, competitive pricing may be the overriding concern.

3. Market your whole crop.

Hay is a multiple-harvest crop, but not all cuttings are equally marketable. First cuttings of alfalfa may have coarse stems or be of lower quality due to rain damage. Weeds may invade thinning stands during summer or winter. The successful hay grower will have a plan for marketing all cuttings. Usually, the high quality cuttings will almost market themselves in that high quality hay is always in demand. Plan to have an outlet for rain-damaged hay, bottom bales, and other less than optimum quality hay. Some producers move this hay locally to beef herds at reduced prices. Others sell hay as mulch. Some will feed this hay to their own livestock.

4. Use all available marketing methods.

Establish market your hay locally and regionally using advertising in widely read publications. For wider markets, make use of public computerized hay directories such as the one operated by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture. Finally, consider using the services of a marketing association like KPHGA.