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To: Rains County Leader

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Bale Weight Determines Cost of Hay

Time and time again I get calls from folks asking what hay is worth. Well obviously it's worth what you are willing to pay. However, we must think about hay the same as you would any other feed commodity. When feeding sack feed, the first question that we ask is what is the price per pound/or price per ton? Hay is no different.

Purchasing hay at a fixed price per bale can result in unexpected high prices per ton. Weights of hay bales vary considerably. Most other commodities such as feed grains, supplements, and other items are sold on a weight basis.

Typically in this county we buy Bermuda grass, Bahia, or mixed hay. As you look at the information below, in some cases it might be more economical to purchase hay such as alfalfa because you will be buying higher protein forages cheaper. Please pay close attention to the cost per ton when feeding small square bales. On a large scale operation this could be very costly.

Individuals who purchase hay by the bale (rather than by the ton) should know the average weight of bales they are purchasing and calculate the cost per ton of that hay.

Tables 1 and 2, show the cost per ton of hay at various bales weights and prices of large and small bales.

Table 1. Cost per Ton of Hay at Various Bale Weights (Large Bales)

	Price per Bale (\$)							
	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65
Weight of Bale (lbs)	Cost/Ton Hay (\$)							
900	67	78	89	100	111	122	133	144
1000	60	70	80	90	100	110	120	130
1100	54	63	72	82	91	100	109	118
1200	50	58	66	74	83	92	100	108
1300	46	54	61	70	77	85	92	100
1400	43	50	57	65	71	79	85	93

Table 2. Cost per Ton of Square Baled Hay at Various Bale Weights

Weight of Bales				
Bale Price \$	50	55	60	65
	Cost/Ton Hay \$			
2.50	100	91	83	77
2.72	110	100	92	85
3.00	120	110	99	92
3.25	130	118	108	100
3.50	140	127	116	108
4.00	160	145	133	123
4.50	180	163	150	138
5.00	200	182	167	154
5.50	220	198	183	169
6.00	240	218	198	186
6.50	260	234	216	199
7.00	280	252	233	215

For all hay users, it is a good practice to take hay samples and have them tested prior to feeding or purchase, but it is even more imperative for someone purchasing hay. Testing the nutrient value of hay can provide valuable information when evaluating the price of hay from multiple sources. It can also be beneficial for hay purchasers buying hay by the bale to weigh several bales and determine an average weight when comparing hay prices across multiple hay sellers.

I hope this information will give you some insight on how much hay is really costing you. In the economic climate such as this, we must try to minimize our expenses while maintaining a quality livestock operation. Right now our first cutting or two have been

good, so pay attention to the cost because we have more options as a consumer this year as opposed to the previous years.