

Ark: No Hay Rustling Reports

Missouri Farm Bureau Reports Hay Thefts

PARIS, ARK.

Scarce supplies are prompting reports of hay hijacking in Missouri, but south of the border, bales seem to be staying in place, extension agents with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture said Wednesday.

The president of Missouri's Farm Bureau said thieves are targeting hay left in the field and selling it.

While drought has made hay expensive in northern and western Arkansas and the Midwest, "I've not heard about people coming around and stealing hay," said Lance Kirkpatrick, Logan County extension staff chair for the Division of Agriculture. When it comes to a dishonest return on investment, "It's easier to load up 10 cows in a trailer and get \$10,000. It's harder loading up 10 bales and getting maybe \$1,000."

Jerri Lephiew, Columbia County extension agent, said that during a pesticide certification class Tuesday evening "I had a whole room full of hay producers. If it had been happening, I'd have heard about it."

Robert Seay, extension staff chair in one of the counties hit hardest by drought – Benton County – laughed, saying "for thievery to occur, there has to be something available to steal, or worth stealing!"

Meanwhile, cattle and hay producers keep hoping for rain.

"Soil moisture is nowhere near where it needs to be," Kirkpatrick said. "If you go down 4-5 inches, the soil is dry."

Kirkpatrick said that this fall "we're worse off now than this summer. Logan County has been dry for two years" and calculated the county would need about 45 inches of rain through May 2013 to make up for the moisture deficit. Δ