

# Available Feed – Questionable Quality



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**T**he feed situation this year is much different from 2007 – there appears to be adequate hay available to winter the cow herd. The big question this year is in regard to quality of the hay.

With adequate to more than adequate rainfall during the spring, there was good growth of forages for hay. However, it was difficult to get hay harvested at the proper stage and without it being rained on, leading to the problem of how to properly supplement existing hay. A forage test is needed to determine quality of the forage. For \$10 UT can perform a forage test to determine protein and energy content. Local UT Extension agents can assist with hay sampling.

The bigger question is how to supplement if additional protein or energy is required. Supplemental feeds are expensive and the old standbys – corn and cottonseed or soybean meal – may not be the best choices. Find out

what feeds are available in the area. Compare cost per ton of feed and the actual cost per pound of the nutrient needed (i.e., protein or energy). Add the cost of transportation, storage and potential wastage during storage to the total costs.

A cost often not considered is the expense of specific mineral mixes, which are required when certain supplements are fed. Corn gluten and distiller grains have a high sulfur content. Also the high phosphorus content of these feeds may allow for the use of a mineral with a lower phosphorus level. Work with your local feed dealer to determine specific mineral mixes needed and cost.

In summary, beef producers should plan ahead for feeding the beef herd this winter. Forage test each cutting of hay. Find the most economical source of supplemental feed. Remember that inadequate nutrition can lower calf crop percent and also reduce weaning weights.  $\Delta$

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