

Nutritional Considerations For 2010 Hay Crop

URBANA, ILL.

Most beef producers have ample quantities of hay stored for this winter, but the quality of that hay is questionable. The rains that seemed to occur every 3 or 4 days this summer really made conditions difficult for the baling of quality hay. In fact, there is little quality hay available this year. This poor quality hay may severely impact the ability of cows to develop quality calves while maintaining body condition during the cold winter months.

Hay that has been rained on (and in many cases rained on more than once) loses nutritional quality. How much it loses will depend upon several factors, including: maturity of the forage, forage specie, time interval between cutting and rainfall, amount and length of rain, raking/tedding, etc. So it is not always easy to

determine how much quality has been lost when rain does occur before baling. One cannot eyeball hay and determine nutrient content to make ration changes that will enable cows to consume a ration that meets their needs and the needs of their developing calf.

Energy and protein will definitely be lower in this year's hay crop. This is due to the above mentioned rain as well as the fact that the vast majority of hay was harvested well past its prime. Any hay that was cut on time and baled without a rain should probably be sold into the higher value horse hay market, which will improve your bottom line because you can certainly purchase alternative protein and energy feedstuffs much cheaper to supplement poor quality hay to provide adequate nutrition. Δ



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