

# Specialist Offers Hay Saving Tips To Replenish Feed Supplies



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**T**he feeding of hay during the summer and fall of 2007 and into 2008 has completely depleted the supply of hay for most producers. Now, how do you rebuild these supplies? Fertilizer prices are higher than ever before and no one knows how

dry it will be this summer. There are a few strategies that can be used.

First, produce as much hay as possible this spring. Since the rate of fertilization will probably be reduced, you must harvest more acres. This may be achieved by renting additional land where forage can be harvested as hay. Another strategy is to harvest hay from pastures not normally utilized for hay. During the spring there is a lot of forage wasted because animals are allowed to selectively graze pastures. Some areas are eaten into the ground while other areas receive minimal grazing.

Utilize some electric fencing to reduce the amount of grazing area available to the cows. In most years, it is possible to restrict animals to about 50 percent of the normal acreage and still have adequate feed to meet animal needs. Setting up some small fields and utilizing rotational

grazing will help ensure that animals will utilize all available forage. The remaining areas can then be harvested as hay. After the first cutting of hay, the animals can be allowed to use all of the pasture area for grazing. It is recommended that the areas selected for hay harvest be those fields that are relatively smooth and where hay equipment can safely be operated.

Another option for adding to the hay supply is to plant summer annuals that can be used for hay. This option is dependent on adequate rainfall during the summer season. Forecasts indicate that it may be later into summer before it starts getting dry this year. This may be enough time to get at least one or two cuttings. Before deciding to plant the summer annuals for hay, consider the challenges associated with utilizing these forages for hay. Sudan-sorghum and millet have relatively large stems and are difficult to dry and have lowered digestibility. Be sure that you have equipment available to crimp or crush the stems to get quick drying. Remember that even with normal rainfall it is difficult to produce quality hay from summer annuals because a few days delay in harvest can quickly increase maturity and decrease quality. Consider the economics for this option since seed, fertilizer and soil preparation will be expensive. Also, be on guard for nitrate toxicity.  $\Delta$

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