

Disaster Relief

Replacing Hay with Grain

Floods or other emergencies may cause shortages of the usual roughage feeds. If you have to make substitutions, fibrous grains such as oats, barley, or ground ear corn may replace part, if not all, of the hay you usually feed. Continue to feed some hay or straw unless you have experience with high grain feeding. Spread any major changes in a feeding program over a period of several days rather than switching abruptly. Watch animals carefully during the change.

Amount of Grain

The following recommended amounts supply maintenance and growth energy to animals under different conditions. If you feed some hay, you can reduce the amount of grain.

- Barley and oats have about equal feeding value for cattle and sheep.
- Barley or ground ear corn can substitute for hay at the rate of 13 lb of barley or 14 lb of ground ear corn per 20 lb of hay.
- Ground ear corn (or corn and cob meal) is safer than shelled corn.
- Wheat and milo need added fiber, which can be supplied by dried beet pulp or about 8 to 10 percent of other cheap fibrous feeds, such as chopped or ground straw or seed screenings. This mix is near the fiber level in barley or ground ear corn.

Feed Management

You will need to provide feed bunks for grain. Pelleting or cubing may help lower feed waste, particularly if the cubes contain some roughage in addition to grain. Pelleting also prevents animals from sorting the feed mix. This is especially important when you use lower quality ingredients. Cattle that have not been fed for several days or cattle not accustomed to grain should be fed only 2 to 4 pounds per head the first day (if only one feeding is possible), or a total of 5 pounds (if they can be fed twice daily). Increase the feed by about 2 pounds daily for large cows. Make further increases slowly. Add hay to the ration as soon as possible. Use roughage with the grain, even if it is of poor quality. Using as little as 3 or 4 pounds of straw greatly reduces the hazards of feeding grains only.

Price Relationships

Determine how much grain to substitute according to local availability and prices. The cheapest feed is not necessarily the best buy. On a nutritional basis, bulky hay costs more to ship than grains. If you must buy and haul hay, pay particular attention to quality. Cheap hay may not be worth the cost of shipping.

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Revised by **Lamar Adams**, County Extension Director

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