

Guide to Evaluating Hay

Hay has great potential to gain popularity as a cash crop. Options for marketing include quality tested hay auction, tele-auction, computer auction, sale by dealers, or neighbor-to-neighbor sales.

The forage description you provide on the forms in this brochure will be used to provide comprehensive information to hay buyers. To get the best price for high quality hay, it must be properly evaluated and described when marketed. Descriptive characteristics (e.g., color, odor, mold, heating, mixture, dust, foreign material) can be recorded on the questionnaires in this brochure. You should also get a chemical description from a wet chemistry or NIRS (Near Infrared Reflectance Spectroscopy) test.

One of the enclosed questionnaires (Form A) should be filled out by the grower at harvest and the other (Form B) by a trained forage evaluator. The *Hay Color and Condition Guide* and *Guide to Determining Alfalfa Maturity Stages*, which are on Field Card A3415 (purchased separately from this brochure), will assist growers and evaluators in accurately describing the hay for listing and sale. For information on how to take a representative forage sample for testing, see Wisconsin extension bulletin A2309 *Taking an Accurate Forage Sample*.

Both completed questionnaires should be returned to your county extension office. Contact your county office for information on upcoming forage auctions and sales.

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Produced by the Department of Agricultural Journalism, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

This publication is available from your Wisconsin county Extension office or from:
Agricultural Bulletin, 30 N. Murray St., Rm. 245, Madison, Wisconsin 53715, (608) 262-3346

Form A Producer Questionnaire (to be filled out by grower at harvest)

This information supplements
forage analyses.

Date _____ Lot no. _____

Producer _____

Street address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Field location _____
(field no., etc.)

Lab Name _____

Lab address _____

Tested: yes _____ no _____

1. **Cutting date** _____
month day year

Date stored _____

2. **Type of hay** (check one):

legume _____ grass _____

legume-grass _____ straw _____

grass-legume _____

legume type _____

(name)

grass type _____

(name)

3. **Stage of maturity** (check one):

(See Field Card A3415— *Guide to Determining Alfalfa Maturity Stages*)

Stages 0-2—pre-bud _____

Stages 3-4—pre-bloom _____

Stage 5—first flower _____

(or 10% bloom)

Stage 6a)—25% of plants _____

in bloom

6b)—50% of plants _____

in bloom

6c)—full bloom _____

(more than 50% of plants in bloom)

4. **Cutting** (check one):

first _____

second _____

third _____

fourth _____

other _____

5. **Estimated number of bales in this lot:** _____

Average bale weight (lb) _____

& **Drying agent used:** yes _____ (type: _____)

no _____

7. **Preservative used:** yes _____ (type: _____)

no _____

8. **Weeds:** yes _____ (name(s) _____)

no _____

9. **Estimated percentage of grass weeds in stand**

(check one):

0-20% _____

21-40% _____

over 40% _____

10. **Rain damage:** yes _____ no _____

When in process did rain occur:

0-12 hrs _____ 25-36 hrs _____

13-24 hrs _____ more _____

Comments:

Signed: _____

Date _____

Return completed forms A & B and a chemical analysis to your county extension office.

Form B

Alfalfa Hay Description (to be filled out by a trained evaluator)

This information supplements forage analyses.

Date _____ Lot no. _____
 Producer _____
 Street address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Lab name _____
 Lab address _____

Lot Description

Type storage^a _____
 Quantity (bales): _____

Artificially dried: yes _____ no _____
 air _____ heat _____

Bale size^b, weight, no. wires/strings: _____

Hay Description (Use Field Card A3415– *Guide to Determining Hay Color and Condition*)

1. Maturity: _____
 (See question 3 on questionnaire A.)

2. Foreign material (indicate material present and percent of it in bale):
 grass species
 0-10% _____ 11-25% _____ 26-40% _____
 41-60% _____ more than 60% _____

grass maturity
 vegetative _____ boot _____
 heading _____

weed species
 0-10% _____ 11-25% _____ 26-40% _____
 41-60% _____ more than 60% _____

straw _____ %
 other _____ %
 (e.g., manure, dead rakings, wire, twine, cans)

3. Color (check one): #1 dark green _____
 #2 light green _____
 #3 yellowish green _____
 #4/5 mature legume/grass _____
 #5/6 light bleach or light rain damage _____
 streaks of #3/6-streak bleach _____
 green with blotches of #6/7 moderate rain damage or
 heavy windrow bleach _____
 #10 moldy (can include white patches) _____
 lighter than #11-light brown _____
 #11 dark brown _____

Preservative treated: #8 gold _____
 #9 gold/brown _____

4. Cure (check all that apply):
 No discoloration, no musty odor (fresh) _____
 slight discoloration _____
 slight musty odor (#10) _____
 slight white mold _____
 heavy white mold _____

5.* Stem characteristics (check one in each of a, b, and c; see Field Card, A3415, for guide to determining stem diameter):
 (a) Size: fine _____ medium-fine _____ medium _____ coarse _____
 (b) Texture: Soft^c _____ medium soft^c _____ hard^c _____
 (c) Shape: hollow stem _____ woody stem _____ flat/crushed _____

^cTo determine stem softness, use the palm of your hand and press hard on the cut edge of a bale. This will be painful if stems are hard and tough.

*Must open several bales to determine these characteristics,

6.* Estimated leafiness

(check one):

1. no leaf shatter _____
2. light leaf shatter (leaves intact on 90%+ of nodes) _____
3. moderate leaf shatter (leaves intact on 75%+ of nodes) _____
4. heavy leaf shatter (leaves intact on less than 50% of nodes) _____
5. all leaves removed _____

7. Other distinguishing characteristics or features: _____

Described by _____

Agency _____

Attach chemical analysis to this form:

Laboratory name _____

Address _____

Return completed forms A & B and the chemical analysis to your county extension office.

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I-08-88-3.5M-100-E

^aHaymow (open, enclosed, or partial shed); outside stack (covered, not covered, how covered); special stacking.

^bSmall square, large square, large round, etc.