

# 2008 Southeast Hay Contest Results

A Cooperative Extension Effort of  
Auburn University, Clemson University, The University of Florida,  
and The University of Georgia

Final results for the 2008 Southeastern Hay Contest are listed in Table 1. The results are broken down into the six categories of the contest: warm season perennial grass hay (bermudagrass, bahiagrass), perennial peanut and alfalfa hay, perennial cool season grass (tall fescue, orchardgrass, etc.), mixed and annual grass hay, grass baleage, and legume baleage categories. This contest is held in conjunction with the Sunbelt Agricultural Expo in Moultrie, GA.

Despite another drought-stressed growing season across the entire Southeast, 195 entries were received in 2008. Samples came from in from all across the Southeast and the overall average Relative Forage Quality (RFQ) was just over 118.

**What is Relative Forage Quality?** Past hay quality prediction equations were based on the fiber *concentration* of the hay crop. However, forage crops can have similar fiber content yet have very different digestibility. For instance, Tifton 85 bermudagrass often has a higher fiber concentration than other bermudagrass varieties, yet is more digestible. This improved digestibility results in enhanced animal performance, but is not reflected using traditional hay testing methods. The Relative Forage Quality index was developed by the University of Wisconsin to predict the fiber *digestibility* and animal intake of harvested crops. Unfortunately, these equations were not applicable to warm season forages like bermudagrass, bahiagrass or perennial peanut. Since 2003, hundreds of warm season samples have been used to develop an RFQ equation for bermudagrass and other warm season forages. Currently, all forage sample results from the UGA Feed and Forage Testing Lab in Athens contain an estimate of Relative Forage Quality. This value is a single, easy to interpret number that improves producer understanding of a forage's quality and helps in establishing a fair market value for the product.

**How can Relative Forage Quality help me?** Relative Forage Quality allows hay producers to easily categorize and price hay lots based on relative quality. Cattle producers can purchase hay lots depending on its end use. For example, there is little need to feed high-end quality hay to livestock that could easily utilize poorer quality forage. Hay with a RFQ of 115-130 can be fed to maintain beef cow-calf pairs, hay with an RFQ of 125-150 is adequate for stocker cattle or young growing replacement heifers, and hay with an RFQ of 140-160 is suitable for dairy cattle in the first three months of lactation. It is also easy to see that Relative Forage Quality could provide the framework for a quality hay marketing system. For example, hay with a RFQ of 155 could conceptually be labeled "premium" hay, while hay with an RFQ of 105 could be labeled "fair". This simple system could allow producers to price hay consistently and fairly across harvest maturity, fertilization regimes, or plant species (i.e. bermudagrass, bahiagrass, perennial peanut, or tall fescue).

## Category winners from the 2008 Southeastern Hay Contest. (195 Total Samples Entered)

Category	Farm	Crude Protein, %	TDN, %	RFQ
Warm Season Perennial Grass Hay	<i>Overall Range:</i>	(6.2 - 20.6)	(40.9 - 66.3)	(70 - 144)
	Yance Farms Inc. Houston Co., AL	16.3	64.6	144
	Gill-Starr Farm Anderson Co., SC	13.2	59.0	138
	Lightning's Hay Farms	15.5	62.6	131

Grady Co., GA

**Perennial Peanut/Alfalfa  
Hay**

<u>Overall Range:</u>	(11.3 - 27.9)	(56 - 73.3)	(103 - 228)
<b>David Harden</b> Walker Co., GA	<b>26.0</b>	<b>73.3</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>McCollum Farms</b> Coffee Co., GA	<b>23.2</b>	<b>71.6</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>Vickers Still Farm</b> Coffee Co., GA	<b>22.9</b>	<b>69.5</b>	<b>191</b>

**Cool Season Perennial  
Grass Hay**

<u>Overall Range:</u>	(9.1 - 16.6)	(46.6 - 68.1)	(90 - 163)
<b>Mitch Whitfield</b> Banks Co., GA	<b>16.6</b>	<b>68.1</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>James Burton</b> Walker Co., GA	<b>15.6</b>	<b>55.5</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>John Watson</b> Walker Co., GA	<b>12.4</b>	<b>55.4</b>	<b>115</b>

**Mixed, Annual Grass, or  
Other Hay**

<u>Overall Range:</u>	(5.6 - 19.4)	(42.5 - 66.0)	(78 - 178)
<b>Little Joe Reams</b> Madison Co., FL	<b>16.0</b>	<b>66.0</b>	<b>178</b>
<b>Trice Farm</b> Upson Co., GA	<b>11.3</b>	<b>60.5</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>Lightning's Hay Farms</b> Grady Co., GA	<b>10.1</b>	<b>59.2</b>	<b>157</b>

**Grass Baleage**

<u>Overall Range:</u>	(7.7 - 17.4)	(40.5 - 61.0)	(70 - 164)
<b>Hidden Valley Farms</b> Oconee Co., SC	<b>10.4</b>	<b>61.0</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>Troy Platt</b> Madison Co., FL	<b>17.4</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>Leavelle Farms</b> Tuscaloosa Co., AL	<b>8.5</b>	<b>57.3</b>	<b>153</b>

**Legume Baleage**

<u>Overall Range:</u>	(11.8 - 12.9)	(55.6 - 58.2)	(122 - 144)
<b>Troy Platt</b> Madison Co., FL	<b>12.5</b>	<b>58.2</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>Troy Platt</b> Madison Co., FL	<b>12.9</b>	<b>57.7</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>Troy Platt</b> Madison Co., FL	<b>11.8</b>	<b>55.6</b>	<b>122</b>

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