

Feeding Hay—Do you have enough?

By Adam Hady, UW-Extension Richland County Agriculture Agent

This year has been an interesting year to say the least. In most areas of the state beef producers experienced some level of drought. During the drought many pastures went dormant, so we turned to feeding hay throughout the summer. Hay yields may have also been reduced. Since we may have fed large parts of the winter feed supply during late summer, the question **that needs to be answered is “do I have enough hay?” The next question we have to ask is if we don’t is,” how much do I need to buy?”**

We start by taking a feed inventory. In our inventory we account for the amount of hay we have on hand. Part of this calculation is determining the size and type of hay we have and what other forage resources we have on hand. Ideally our inventories will go from some number of bales available to how many tons available. We then compare that to how many tons of hay or similar forage we need to feed our herd. Typically, a beef animal will consume three percent of its weight in dry matter. So for 1,000 pound beef cow that is 30 lbs. of dry matter a day. On average, dry hay is 88% dry matter, which means that the beef cow needs 34 lbs. of baled hay as fed per day to meet her intake. If we look at feeding our cow herd winter feed October through March, which would be about 180 days, each cow will consume about 3.06 tons of hay during that time period. This same process should then be used for calculating how much hay is needed by the other classes of cattle we have. We now know how much hay the herd will eat, but how much is wasted? One area where there could be a possibility of extending your feed on hand is how it is fed and

stored. Many beef producers utilize round bales as an effective method for feeding hay. If farmers are still storing their round bales outside and uncovered they are likely throwing close to one third of their hay crop away. Adjusting the way we feed our hay, especially round bales, may also significantly reduce the amount of hay waste. The first way to minimize the amount of hay waste is through the feeding system. Michigan State University looked at using four different feeding systems: a cradle feeder, cone feeder, regular round bale feeder and a wagon feeder, that the cows wasted 4.2, .09, 1.6, and 3.5 pounds of hay per cow a day.

The second way to reduce feed intake and waste may be limit or timed feeding of hay. Research from Minnesota and Illinois, suggest that restricting the amount of time cattle have access to feed will, in fact, reduce the amount of dry matter intake, and reduce feed waste without impacting cow performance. The Minnesota results showed that cows allowed 24 hour access consumed 27.4 lbs. per day and 7.7% DM feed waste. Cattle restricted at 14 hours and 6 hours consumed 24.4 lbs. /day and 21.2 lbs. /day respectively and had feed waste of 4.3% DM and .8% DM respectively. They projected using the 6 hour time frame on a 40 cow herd would save \$3,600 a year.

After you have calculated how much feed you need per cow, and figured how much she will waste, do you have enough for the winter based off of your inventory? How much do you need to buy and are there areas we can save in our feed waste in times when hay may be a little short in quantities and high in price.

Beef Quality Assurance and Beef Quality Assurance—Transportation Certifications being offered online or at Altoona on Oct. 26th

Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) and BQA-Transportation do more than just help those raising dairy and beef to capture more value from their market cattle: BQA also reflects a positive public image and instills consumer confidence in the beef industry. Implementing BQA best management practices, including how cattle are transported, assures market steers, heifers, cows, and bulls are the best they can be. The stakes are even higher today because of increased public attention on animal welfare. Various markets will be requiring proof of BQA and BQA-Transportation Certifications as of January 1st, 2019.

Online BQA certification is free. Farmers need to register online and pick the training that best matches their operation. Please visit <https://www.bqa.org/certification>. In response to the demand for in-person BQA training, Equity Livestock Cooperative, UW-Extension and WI Beef Council will be hosting BQA Certification training at the Equity Co-op Livestock Auction barn in Altoona, WI on Friday, October 26th. Contact Mark Hagedorn at 715-839-4712 or mark.hagedorn@ces.uwex.edu for more information or to register.