



Saskatchewan Hay & Pasture Report

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Note from the Saskatchewan Forage Council

Another growing season in Saskatchewan has come and gone. Although the growing season on the Canadian Prairies is normally a short one, this growing season felt condensed. A late spring, followed by a cool summer and dry fall, has left some of us thinking, "Where did the season go"? None the less, there is hay in the stack and pastures are still supporting healthy livestock, which indicate that important things were accomplished amidst the blur of the season. Reports from around the province indicate that forage yields this year were near average in many regions. Although supplies of hay outside our borders have seemed to improve, there are some regions where low supply is still driving demand for forages. This has put upward pressure on prices this season, and current market prices indicate that producers purchasing hay are paying roughly 15-25% more than last year. In this issue of the *Saskatchewan Hay & Pasture Report*, you will find details on regional crop conditions, a review of the forage season in each of the Prairie Provinces (AB/SK/MB), an economic analysis of hay storage, a report about the Canadian Forage Variety Performance Testing Program, a focus on Sainfoin as a perennial legume option, and an article about an innovative hay auction idea. In addition, you will find a summary of forage market information from SK and surrounding jurisdictions.

As always, we welcome your feedback and encourage anyone interested in being placed on our email distribution list to contact the SFC at office@saskforage.ca. You may also want to visit our website www.saskforage.ca for regular news and information related to the forage industry.

Your *Saskatchewan Hay & Pasture Report* Editor,
Coy Schellenberg, PAg

Saskatchewan Agriculture Crop Report

(for period ending September 30, 2013)

Seventy-nine per cent of the 2013 crop is now combined, according to Saskatchewan Agriculture's weekly Crop Report. Significant rainfall recorded last week slowed harvest progress in most areas of the province. Fifteen per cent is swathed or is ready to straight-cut. The five-year average (2008-2012) for this time of year is 74 per cent combined and 18 per cent swathed or ready to straight-cut.

Harvest progress is most advanced in the west-central region, where 95 per cent of the crop is combined. Seventy-two per cent is combined in the southeast; 85 per

cent in the southwest; 68 per cent in the east-central region; 74 per cent in the northeast and 88 per cent in the northwest.

Rainfall throughout the province ranged from nil to 81 mm. Many areas received over 35 mm of rain, and heavy precipitation was reported in the southwestern, east-central and northeastern regions. Many areas in the southwestern, southeastern and east-central regions have been experiencing rain delays for a couple of weeks.

Across the province, topsoil moisture on cropland is rated as five per cent surplus, 65 per cent adequate, 19 per cent short and 11 per cent very short. Topsoil moisture on hay and pasture land is rated as two per cent surplus, 63 per cent adequate, 24 per cent short and 11 per cent very short.

Pasture conditions are rated as nine per cent excellent, 43 per cent good, 29 per cent fair, 16 per cent poor and three per cent very poor.

Rain and strong winds caused the majority of the crop damage. The rain has resulted in bleaching and sprouting of some cereal crops. Wind has caused some shattering losses in swathed canola and ripe crops.

Farmers are busy combining, hauling bales and completing fall weed control operations.

For a breakdown of regional conditions, please visit the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture's [Crop Report online](#).

Saskatchewan Forage Year in Review – 2013

Kevin France, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

It is safe to say that 2013 will be recorded as a “challenging” year for hay and pasture production. The 2013 spring started off cool and wet. Large snow packs coupled with a cool late spring led to a late start in our growing season. We also experienced a fairly widespread frost event in the spring which affected some of the alfalfa fields but had a minimal effect on total production.

Cutting and baling hay was also a challenge this year. July was fairly wet and humid throughout the province. Most areas, except the west-central, had significant rainfalls in July and high relative humidity which led to either late cutting or swaths being rained on. In most cases this delayed baling well into August.

The moisture did assist with production levels throughout the province, with average to above average yield (1.8 ton/acre). However, forage quality varied throughout the province. Those who were able to cut and bale in July are reporting average to good quality hay, but those who delayed cutting or had swaths that received rain are reporting average to below average quality hay.

Hay stocks in Saskatchewan seem to be tight. The majority of producers were able to manage feed supplies through the 2012/2013 winter but there is an evident need to replenish those stocks. Therefore, hay movement may be limited this fall. This seems to be influencing the current price for feed. Alfalfa hay is averaging \$85-95/metric tonne and grass/alfalfa hay is \$70-80/metric tonne. Hay prices are variable throughout the province and are undoubtedly related to local feed availability.

Alfalfa hay is averaging \$85-90 per metric tonne and grass/alfalfa hay is \$70-80 per metric tonne

Alfalfa weevils were not a prominent concern in 2013; numbers seemed to be lower, except for the south-central area of the province. However, if the weevil continues its Northwest migration it may be a greater concern in 2014.

The majority of pastures in Saskatchewan are in fair to good condition. The late winter and diminished feed supplies forced some producers to turn-out cattle onto pasture early this year. The early turnout may have effected total production and forage health. However, the timely moisture throughout the province aided in production and allowed most pastures to remain green well into August. As pasture supplies become short, cattle will likely move off pastures and onto stubble grazing in early October as harvest finishes up. The past 45 days in the province have been relatively dry; this has benefited harvest however it has left some of the pastures fairly dry and moisture deficient.



Alfalfa Weevil Larvae
Photo: Lorne Klein

High grain prices continue to place pressure on forage acres, but the actual acreage decline, if any, within the province is not known. Future forage acres are unsure at this time and continue to be heavily dependent on grain prices, livestock prices and the forage supply.

Alberta Forage Year in Review – 2013

Grant Lastiwka, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development

Again in 2013 there was a continued but small movement of land out of forage to cereals and oilseeds. This spring saw much of the stored forage inventory used up due to a number of factors including: a long winter, increased hay demand from feedlots, and iced snow conditions and wildlife limiting access to some winter grazing. This spring, marginally more forage growers fertilized hay stands since fertilizer prices were a bit lower, hay stands a bit older, and forage inventory low. The majority of pastures were not fertilized.

There was a common trend across Alberta's broad forage industry. A dry fall in 2012 and a dry start in the spring of 2013 slowed early season growth in much of Alberta. Rains came in June in many areas and continued to mid-July, so making hay was a challenge in spring and early summer. There were some small windows of time in late June where immature hay did get harvested with little rain damage. Some first cut was made into bale silage as a way to avoid weather risk on newer hay stands where a second cut would be favorable. However, more often than not, June and July cut hay was rained on and laid out for extended periods of time. A few fields never got baled and were left laying for second cut collection. Haying in late July, August and September of mature first cut with a small amount of rain was common. Yields were good especially of fertilized fields. Second cut on those early cut fields gave good quality and quantity. Pastures that were managed rotationally were very good to excellent. Pastures that were not managed vary from good to fair depending on time of livestock turn out. The dry conditions through August have stopped growth on pastures that were not managed by controlled grazing. "It is very notable by fall forage growth which pastures were or were not using managed grazing." said Carla Amonson, manager of the West Central Forage Association in Evansburg. That is true elsewhere also.

"It is very notable by fall forage growth which pastures were or were not using managed grazing"



Sainfoin Field Tour in Alberta
Photo: Grant Lastiwka

These spring summer rains, then dry conditions thereafter explain the hay yields being above average in many areas with quality being down. Yields in the drier areas, east near Oyen, were above average but below the last two years fantastic hay crops. In the far north in the Peace, Fort Vermilion after two years of severe drought was granted a reprieve and hay and pasture yields were near average with rain delaying fall grain harvest. Exceptions to provincial results are some dry pockets near Bonneyville, Fort Kent, Willingdon, etc. where hay and pasture growth was below normal.

Hay values in Alberta have yet to be fully determined, but reports and asking values indicate a range of 2 to 4 cents/lb (\$44-88/metric tonne) for first cut hay, depending on rain damage and maturity. There are also indications of a 5 to 6 cents/lb (\$110-132/metric tonne) range for second cut hay.

Grasshoppers were a problem in parts of the Peace, but since they started late they did not do notable damage. Hail damage was not as severe as the past few years with only some salvage cereals going into the forage supply.

Densified forage yields were above average but were over mature so are grading Choice. Those who tried to cut hay earlier in July to mid-August for Premium were damaged by rain. Timothy harvested in southern Alberta was the worst hay quality grade percentage on record. After mid-August, most hay was cut with no rain and had tremendous, well above average yields. Demand for mixed hay for export is growing as supplies in the USA have been down over the last two years due to drought. Densified forage acres were stagnant in 2013. Densified companies are paying some high prices for the choice hay as a way to keep forage acres and not lose them to the grains industry.

The majority of Alberta's alfalfa seed crops are grown around the Brooks area. Alfalfa seed yields are less than last year but still about 15% above average. Quite a few fields are around 600 pounds/acre, but dockage is about 25%. On average, alfalfa seed yield will be 450-550 pounds cleaned/acre. Quality is very good with good color. Insect issues were about normal, but it seems there are a few more insect issues each year. Some seed growers sprayed 2-3 times. Prices for alfalfa seed look like there may be a slight rise or stay the same. Although there were boxes of leaf cutter bees increasing, boxes were not as full.

Manitoba Forage Year in Review – 2013

Glenn Friesen, Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives

Manitoba's hay crop was delayed this spring, leaving a shortened season for our growers. The snow seemed to hang around late into May. Overall, yields were average across the province; however quality has been challenging. Many producers in the central, southwest and northwest regions had a significant amount of their first cut rained on, reducing the quality. Second cut harvest is continuing late into the year, with initial yields and quality being reported as average. In the southern and eastern parts of the province, where third and fourth cuts are common, yields are average to slightly below because of sparse rainfalls; however, quality will be above average. Corn silage harvesting continues with above average yields across the province.

Reports are indicating that good quality beef hay is in the range of 3.5 to 5 cents per lb or \$77-110 per metric tonne

The prolonged snow cover on pastures delayed spring green up, putting many pastures grazed early at risk for not maintaining growth late into the year. However, pastures seemed to fair quite well for the first half of the grazing season. Below average rainfall in July and August reduced late summer pasture conditions, stressing pastures in the drier regions of the province.

There are no feed shortages anticipated for the upcoming winter feeding period in Manitoba, as hay supplies seem to be adequate. As far as forage prices go, it's a bit early to determine as most of the trade begins after January 1st. However, prices appear like they will be strong for the third year in a row in Manitoba. Reports are indicating that good quality beef hay is in the range of 3.5 to 5 cents/lb (\$77-110/metric tonne), and that high test dairy quality hay will be more, and could be as high as 9 or 10cents/lb (\$198-220/metric tonne). Note, however, that silage yields are looking very good throughout most of the province, both from cereal greenfeed and corn silage, so this will potentially decrease demand for hay; thus, potentially reducing prices of both beef and dairy quality hay to some degree.

Will a Hay Shed Pay?

Dale Kaliel and Barry Yaremco, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development

Adequate moisture conditions in many parts of the province have resulted in stacks and rows of hay bales. If the winter is mild and cow numbers remain static, there could be a large surplus of hay carried over into the summer of 2014 and fed over the 2014 - 15 winter.

When hay is carried over the course of a winter, bales weather and lose both weight and quality compared to when they were made. This poses a few key questions. What is the potential lost value when storing the bales outside, unprotected from the elements? How much would it cost to store the bales in a shed? Putting both of these together, if it pays to cover the hay, how long would it take for cost savings to pay for a pole hay shed?



*Fabric Structure Hay Shed
Photo: Four Winds Builders, LLC*

What are the losses, and how big can they be?

Research on over-winter bale storage done in the Westlock, AB area indicated a 5.7% reduction in bale weight. A 1,400 pound bale in July would weigh 1,320 pounds the following spring. At 3 cents per pound (\$66/metric tonne or \$60/ton), this weight loss effectively pushes the laid in price from \$42/bale to an equivalent of \$44.55/bale.

To set a possible range for over-wintering weight loss, various locations across North America, have reported bale weight losses as high as 18%. Conversely, weight loss for bales stored under a shed is typically 2%.

Weathering also affects the acceptability of hay to livestock. Cattle eat less of the weather damaged hay, rejecting up to 8% more feed from bales that are stored outdoors compared to indoors. This moves the value of that same bale of hay from \$44.55/bale to \$48.44/bale.

Weathered hay can test 2 to 3% lower in protein, and energy content can be 20 to 50% lower as well

After considering weight loss and waste (acceptability), the next area of concern is the reduction in quality or feed value. Bales stored outdoors tend to squat or flatten out during storage. Surface area in contact with the ground and exposed to rain increases. Weathering and water damage reduces quality. Both consumption and digestibility suffer. This is further compounded by losses in protein and energy content. Weathered hay can test 2 to 3% lower protein (hay that tested 14% after baling can be 10 to 11% the following spring). As well, energy content can be 20 to 50% lower as (TDN value of 63% after baling can be 45 to 55% the next spring). Supplementing two year old hay with barley and protein compensate for lower forage quality could roughly increase the “cost of the 1320 pound bale” by \$13.42.

Will these losses pay for a shed?

Combining the rough estimates of the lost value by either shrink or quality loss; the average 1400 pound hay bale cost climbed from \$42 a bale to \$61.85 per bale (\$60 to \$88.40/Ton), about a 50% increase! A move of this magnitude certainly makes it worth a managers’ while to put a quick budget together to evaluate the “if’s” and “when’s” of putting a shed over hay supplies.

A scenario is described below to illustrate the simple partial budget steps producers can take to evaluate the question, “Should I build a pole shed for my hay to reduce feed loss?” Key considerations include:

- Feeding 250 (1,400 lb) cows for 175 days,
- Requires 882 tons of hay, 1260 bales @ 1400 pounds.
- Size of the shed to hold this amount of hay would be 40ft wide x 420 ft. long x 16 ft. high)
- Base strategy of carrying over 50% of this year’s hay crop cover half of next year’s needs,
- Feed prices: hay - \$0.03/lb. barley \$0.08 /lb, and protein supplement \$0.16/lb.
- Investment costs for pole shed to cover the hay of approx. \$85,000 (materials and construction), with on-going repairs and maintenance penciled in at 1%/annum of original cost

A partial budget was developed, focusing on the annualized added costs and reduced net losses (losses occur in the shed excluded). Future costs and benefits were appropriately discounted.

The economic analysis, as summarized in the partial budget below, generally supports the notions that large losses may justify building a shed to cover hay stores. Under the baseline 50:50 carry-forward strategy, annual cost savings exceed annualized investment and operating costs associated with a shed by over \$4,000 - equivalent to a net benefit of more than \$16/cow. At this pace, feed cost savings would create a pay back on the shed in 13 - 14 years.

Partial Budget: “Should I build a pole shed for my hay to reduce feed loss?”			
Added Costs:		Reduced Costs:	
Annualized Investment Cost	\$7,634	Weight Loss	\$2,764
Annual Repair & Maintenance	850	Waste Loss	1,895
		Quality Loss-late pregnancy	1,384
		Quality Loss-lactation	6,475
Subtotal:	\$8,484	Subtotal:	\$12,517
Net Advantage (Disadvantage): <u>\$4,033</u> or <u>\$16.13/cow</u>			

If the value of hay increases to 4.5 cents a pound (\$99/metric tonne or \$90/ton), the repayment period for the shed would be 7 to 8 years. It's critical for producers to assess their own expected levels of loss, linkages to feeding systems, feed pricing and hay carry-forward strategies. The partial budget analysis can be used to examine the sensitivity of the "pay-back" to each of these factors, and others.

For example, the profitability of the venture is very sensitive to the carry-forward strategy. The break point for the shed investment, under the scenario's feed price and loss assumptions, is at about a 30% year-end stock. At levels less than this, the shed rapidly becomes an added cost burden... that persists for many years. In east central Alberta where it is common practice to carry the better part of the next year's feed needs in inventory, sheds can easily show a net benefit ranging from \$30 - \$40/cow.

Sensitivity of the budget results to feed loss and value is mixed. Every percentage point difference in weight loss from the stack to the shed generates a cost savings change of \$2.50 to \$3.00/cow. A one percent change in feed acceptability, or added wastage, equates to a \$1/cow change in profitability. A one cent per pound change in the value of hay moves the net benefit by about \$2/cow.

In closing cow/calf producers have learned, by experience, that cow herds are challenged to cover the cost of depreciable assets. This does not mean they shouldn't have them... it just means that they need to be justified by dollars and cents additions to profits over the long term. Each farm is different in terms of whether or not assets, like a hay shed, are a profitable investment. The answers are a simple budget away.

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Canadian Forage Variety Performance Testing Program

Wayne Digby, Executive Director, Canadian Forage and Grassland Association

The Canadian Forage and Grassland Association (CFGAs) represents farmers and ranchers that produce, manage and utilize Canada's largest acreage crop (National Forage and Grassland Assessment, June 2012). Cultivated forages for pasture, feed, and seed production, accounts for 33.8 million acres or 39% of the land in Canada devoted to crop production. In comparison, the next largest crop, wheat accounted for 20.4 million acres or 23% of crop land. In addition, over 36 million acres of land is devoted to native or unimproved pastures and rangeland.

As a broad based organization recognizing and supporting the needs of both our domestic forage and grassland producers (hay, silage, pasture, straw, etc.) and our forage and forage product exporters (hay, cubes, pellets, straw) we are very concerned about the need for quality forage and grassland management information. Forage management and agronomic information as well as new and proven forage seed varieties have created economic growth and stability for Canada's forage and grassland industry. Independent forages variety performance information is critically important to Canadian forage and livestock producers.

The break point for the shed investment, under the scenario's feed price and loss assumptions, is at about a 30% year-end stock

If the registration testing system is not replaced with another Performance Testing system, there will be no independent, unbiased data to compare commercially available forage varieties

The CFGA is very concerned about the proposed changes to the *Seed Act* by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and the effect that these changes will have on Performance Variety Testing in Canada. The proposed changes would discontinue the current merit-testing process as a requirement for registration of forage species in Canada. If merit-testing for registration is no longer required, registration trials will not be conducted. If the registration testing system is not replaced with another Performance Testing system, there will be no independent, unbiased data to compare commercially available forage varieties.

The CFGA feels very strongly that there is a need for a Canadian Forage Variety Performance Testing Program that will provide leadership, coordination and financial assistance to provincial and/or Regional Forage Crop Committees to enable the establishment and promotion of head-to-head trials. Through CFGA leadership, a Co-ordinating Committee has been established with the goal of developing a Program with roll out intended for the spring of 2014. With this in mind, the CFGA AGM and Conference in December 2013 will provide an excellent opportunity to bring stakeholders together in the development of this initiative.

While there is strong support within the CFGA membership for a Canadian Forage Variety Performance Testing Program, the Coordinating Committee recognizes that if such an initiative is to move forward and succeed then it is important that it is based on feedback from end users of forage seed and on the value of forage variety testing to producers.

As a means of obtaining feedback from all sectors of the industry, the Coordinating Committee has designed two surveys: an Industry Survey and an End User Survey. The Industry Survey is intended for those in the seed trade or those who provide inputs whereas the End User Survey is intended to gather information from the end users of forage seed (producers). With support from the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association, the CFGA will be making the End User Survey available online in the near future. This survey is aimed at those who purchase and utilize forage crops in their businesses (farm, processing, reclamation etc.). Summarized data from this survey will assist the CFGA in leading the discussions on the key information that a testing program must generate in order to meet the needs of those who utilize forage crops in their production systems. The CFGA views feedback from end users of forage seed as an essential component for the development of a Canadian forage testing strategy, so please take the time to visit the site and complete the survey.

CFGA will be placing information on the CFGA website (www.canadianfga.ca) when the Survey is up and running, so please take a minute to visit the site and provide your input.

For more information please contact:
 CFGA Executive Director
 Phone: (204) 726-9393

Sainfoin – A Great Perennial Legume

*Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta - Newsletter (Sep 2013):
 Article courtesy of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development*

Are you thinking about seeding a new hay or pasture field in the next few years? If so, consider trying something new and adding sainfoin to the mix.

Sainfoin is a non-bloat legume that is suitable for mixtures with alfalfa or cool-season grasses

What is sainfoin?

Sainfoin is a cool-season, perennial forage legume. It was introduced to North America from Europe and parts of Russia and Asia. It develops a deep, branched tap-root and numerous fine lateral roots. It is a non-bloat legume that is suitable for mixtures with alfalfa or cool-season grasses, such as Crested Wheatgrass, Russian Wildrye and Western Wheatgrass. Sainfoin has good longevity under optimal growing and management conditions.

Where should it be seeded?

Sainfoin is best adapted to the Brown and Dark Brown soil zones, and the irrigated areas of southern Alberta. It favours well-drained, light and medium textured soils with good water-holding capacity. It has poor tolerance of acidity and salinity, but handles those soil conditions better than alfalfa. It has good tolerance of alkalinity and drought. Sainfoin grows well in areas that receive 300 mm (11-12 inches) or more of precipitation in a year. However, it is sensitive to flooding, wet soils and high water tables.

Are there any special seeding requirements for sainfoin?

Sainfoin is quite large-seeded compared to the other forage legumes. Even with its large seed size, it still needs to be seeded shallow, no more than $\frac{3}{4}$ inches (2 cm) deep. Be sure to inoculate sainfoin with the correct rhizobia species before seeding to facilitate nodulation (*Note: availability of some inoculants is limited - contact your local forage seed representative or your Ag Info Centre to inquire*). It germinates well, but can establish slowly. In general, spring-seeded sainfoin stands are well established by the fall. There may be some hard seed, but you generally don't need to scarify seed before seeding. It has been suggested that sainfoin is seeded separately and at a right angle to other forages if in a mixture. If seeding sainfoin alone, it is not recommended to use a companion or cover crop.



Sainfoin Flower & Seed Head
Photo: ARECA

What seeding rate should I use?

The seeding rate of sainfoin should be based on the pure live seed (PLS). Suggested seeding densities are 40-60 seeds/metre of row (12-18 seeds/foot of row) and 175-250 seeds/m² (16-23 seeds/ft²). Your final bulk seeding rate will vary with row spacing, seed quality and seed amendments. You can calculate your seeding rate using the '[Forage Seed Mix Calculator](#)' found on Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's website (www.agriculture.alberta.ca).

Can sainfoin be used for hay?

Sainfoin grows upright, making it easy to harvest as hay. It also has excellent leaf retention. If cut at 50-100% flowering, you will maximize yields. It can work in either a two-cut system under irrigation or a one cut system in drier areas. Sainfoin has a higher moisture content than alfalfa, but still cures well for hay. It yields about 80-90% of alfalfa hay.

How about in a pasture system?

Sainfoin is best suited to a rotational grazing system. It can be grazed mid-summer or stockpiled and grazed in the fall. You will have maximum yield when sainfoin is grazed at 50-100% bloom, but you will get better regrowth when it is grazed in the vegetative stage. Sainfoin relies on its residual leaf material and stem buds to support new growth more than alfalfa does. This means it is important to leave

Sainfoin has good leaf retention and frost tolerance, making it ideal for fall grazing

residual sainfoin after each grazing period. Newer varieties, like Mountainview, have improved regrowth compared to older varieties.

Sainfoin has good leaf retention and frost tolerance, making it ideal for fall grazing. Be sure to rest it four to six weeks before a killing frost in order to allow the plants enough time to build up their carbohydrate reserves to survive the winter. It is a good management practice to allow sainfoin plants to reseed themselves every few years. This helps maintain its presence in the stand.

Recent studies conducted in Alberta and Saskatchewan have looked at the potential of including new sainfoin varieties in alfalfa pastures for grazing. They have found that these new varieties are more competitive and have improved regrowth rates compared to some older varieties. These studies have also shown that including 20-30% sainfoin in an alfalfa pasture significantly lowers, and in certain cases eliminates, the risk of bloat.

What is the forage quality of sainfoin?

Sainfoin is highly palatable, with cattle often selecting it over alfalfa when grazing. Research has shown it has lower acid detergent fibre and neutral detergent fibre levels than alfalfa, along with increased digestibility of its stems.

Sainfoin is a non-bloating legume due to the presence of condensed tannins. These tannins bind to protein in feed, allowing it to be digested as bypass protein. This avoids the problem of large amounts of protein being quickly digested in the rumen, which can lead to bloat.

For more information, contact the Alberta Ag-Info Centre at (403) 310-3276.

Rancher and Broker Start Own Video Hay Auction

Rick Mooney, Hay & Forage Grower - eHay Weekly (August 27, 2013)

Gary Steele was frustrated he couldn't locate enough quality hay for his Nisland, SD, beef-cattle operation last year. So, this summer, he and a Wyoming broker started a live-streamed, online video hay auction, called WHB Video Hay Auctions, based in Wyoming.



*Truck Loaded with Large Squares
Photo: Western Hay Brokers*

Steele usually puts up alfalfa and alfalfa-grass mixed hay from 600 irrigated acres and sells what he can't feed to his 700-head, cow-calf herd and 650-head beef feedlot. "But last year was a tough year. We had the drought, and then the spring was so late in getting here," he says. The tight supply situation forced him to buy a large amount of hay out of Canada, sight unseen. "There was no test on it. Some of it was good, some of it was bad, and the trucking costs were pretty high."

After Steele discussed his frustrations with Tom Baer, of Western Hay Brokers in Burns, WY, they decided live video auctions could help sellers market their hay and give hay buyers a better idea of its quality before buying. As part of their business plan, they hooked up with DVAuction, Norfolk, NE, which conducts online livestock auctions and has held farm equipment auctions. They also lined up a trucking brokerage, Griffin Freight, of Stevensville, MT, to offer "affordable" transportation to auction customers. "That's a key component in what we're trying to do," says Baer. "You can figure a typical freight rate is around \$4-4.50/mile. But because the

trucking company can arrange for backhauls, you can bring that down to \$2-3/mile.” That means more money for sellers and buyers.

When a seller wants to consign hay to an upcoming auction, WHB sends out a representative with a video camera. Footage is taken of the hay for sale and of the seller describing the hay in detail. The rep also collects a hay sample and ships it for analysis to Weld Laboratories, Inc., a certified, forage-testing lab in Greeley, CO.

At the auctions held so far, WHB first live-streamed its on-site auction on the Internet. Buyers unable to attend in person could bid on hay as it was offered. Hay featured in videos is bid on immediately after. Video-auction sellers specify minimum acceptable bids. If the bids aren't met, sellers keep their hay. “That's one of the benefits of a video auction for sellers,” says Steele. “If you take your hay to a traditional auction, you pretty much have to sell it at whatever price you're offered because it costs too much to haul it back home again. With a video auction, the hay stays in the seller's yard until it's sold.” Those sellers pay upfront fees that cover the cost for a rep to video and take samples as well as for advertising. The fee is based on how much hay is consigned. For example, a consignment of up to 100 tons would cost \$6/ton; for a 1,000-ton load, it would be \$3/ton. The seller pays WHB a 7% commission on hay sold.

WHB's first, full-fledged video auction was held in July at the Western Hay Brokers site in Burns. It featured 21 hay lots and attracted more than 300 online viewers. Buyers were from Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming and Texas. “The video auction opens up a lot of doors for sellers,” Baer says. “You're not limited to selling your hay to people who live just down the road from you. Potential buyers from all over the country and, for that matter, all around the world, can sit in their offices, see your hay and bid on it.” There are similar advantages for hay buyers. “You can get an idea of how the hay looks,” says Steele. “And you have the lab analysis, so you know how the hay tests. Also, you don't have to travel to the actual sale site to bid. If you're in Alabama or Wisconsin or Pennsylvania, you can bid on hay out of Montana.”

For more information, visit the [Western Hay Brokers](#) website.

To view the original *eHay Weekly* article, [click here](#).

Hay Market Reports and Prices Begin on Next Page....

*The rep also
collects a hay
sample and ships it
for analysis*

Saskatchewan Hay Market Report

Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/FeedForageListing

As Listed Forage Prices (\$/metric Tonne) - October 1, 2013

Baled Forage	Listings	Listings Priced	Tonnes Listed	Tonnes Priced	Lowest Price/T	Highest Price/T	Weighted Average Price/T
Alfalfa	9	9	8,007	8,007	\$80	\$110	\$96
Alfalfa/Grass	16	16	4,797	4,797	\$65	\$95	\$87
Grass	4	4	265	265	\$63	\$85	\$72
Clover	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Green Feed	2	2	272	272	\$76	\$83	\$79
Straw	5	5	238	238	\$28	\$60	\$41
	Listings	Listings Priced	Acres Listed	Acres Priced	Price/lb Range	Price/T Range	Price/Acre Range
Standing Forage	2	2	160	160	\$0.016-\$0.02	\$35-\$45	-

*Small squares

One pasture listing was also found:

- \$100/head/season - pasture capacity of 25 animals

USDA Market News Service Hay Report

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) collects a wide variety of information from hay markets across the country. Presented below is information from those jurisdictions closest to Saskatchewan. For complete USDA hay market listings, please visit the [USDA Market News](http://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/) webpage.

Wyoming, Western Nebraska, and Western South Dakota Weekly Hay Summary (Week ending September 27, 2013)

Dennis Widga, Torrington, WY

www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/to_gr310.txt

All classes traded steady. Demand is beginning to increase throughout the region. Above normal temperatures were again prevalent. Parts of region saw significant rain fall. This resulted in improvements in both top soil and subsoil moisture as well as range and pasture conditions. High testing hay is scarce this year due to below normal precipitation and short irrigation water coupled with above normal temperatures this season.

Weekly Montana Hay Report (Week ending September 27, 2013)

Justin Lumpkin, Billings, MT

www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/bl_gr310.txt

All classes of hay remain steady. Demand is very good for high RFV testing dairy quality hay, more moderate for lower qualities. Interest has started to pick up on cow hay. Alfalfa growers continue to work on finishing up third cutting. Rain across the lower portion of the state hindered producers in getting their hay up this past

week. Hay supplies are much more plentiful than last year. The majority of small grains have been harvested.

Prices are for the week ending September 27, 2013

	Eastern Wyoming	Central & Western Wyoming	Western Nebraska & South Dakota	Montana
Alfalfa				
Supreme	-	-	\$231-233	\$240-250**
Premium	-	\$195**	\$215	
Good	\$190-195 \$170-185*	\$160-176	\$140-200 \$140-150*	\$150-170* \$180**
Fair	\$165	-	\$120-150*	\$130-135
Utility	\$144	-	-	
Alfalfa Grass				
Good	-	-	-	\$200** \$125*
Fair	\$140-160*	\$165	-	
Grass	\$144*	\$150	\$85*	\$160
Greenfeed	\$145	\$152	-	
Straw	\$80-90	\$70	\$100-125	\$45-60
Timothy	-	-	-	-

All prices in U.S. dollars per ton FOB stack in large square bales unless otherwise noted.

Most horse hay sold in small squares.

** large rounds **small squares*

Hay Quality Designations - Physical Descriptions:

Supreme: Very early maturity, pre bloom, soft fine stemmed, extra leafy - factors indicative of very high nutritive content. Hay is excellent colour and free of damage. Relative Feed Value (RFV): >185

Premium: Early maturity, i.e., pre-bloom in legumes and pre head in grass hays; extra leafy and fine stemmed - factors indicative of a high nutritive content. Hay is green and free of damage. RFV: 170-185

Good: Early to average maturity, i.e., early to mid-bloom in legumes and early head in grass hays; leafy, fine to medium stemmed, free of damage other than slight discoloration. RFV: 150-170

Fair: Late maturity, i.e., mid to late-bloom in legumes and headed in grass hays; moderate or below leaf content, and generally coarse stemmed. Hay may show light damage. RFV: 130-150

Utility: Hay in very late maturity, such as mature seed pods in legumes or mature head in grass hays, coarse stemmed. This category could include hay discounted due to excessive damage and heavy weed content or mould. RFV: <130

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