

CHALLENGE TO PRODUCERS WHO GROW ALFALFA FOR BEEF CATTLE

Do you grow alfalfa for your beef cows or for feedlots? If so, maybe you should try harvesting your last cutting as a higher value cash crop this year.

Local alfalfa and grass hay prices have been declining recently, especially hay for beef cows and feedlots. With a larger than usual last cutting expected due to recent rains and an abundant supply of corn stalks about to become available, more downward pressure is likely.

Many remaining alfalfa acres belong to cattle producers growing hay for their own cows or feedlots. Since cow hay and grinding hay currently is worth at least 50 dollars per ton less than dairy hay, can you folks take advantage of this difference in price?

Well, quite frankly, cattle producers have a tremendous advantage over commercial hay growers. If you harvest your hay before it blooms, get it baled in heavy, transportable packages with most of the leaves intact, stored under cover to prevent weather damage, and then marketed to get its true value, you also can sell it for a premium price. But unlike them, if your hay does not meet premium standards, you still can feed it to your own animals.

Now you're thinking "I can't sell my hay. I need it for my own animals." And you're right. But, if you do sell some dairy hay, what you can do is buy other, less expensive hay at the grinding or stock cow hay price. But you get to pocket the extra 40, 50, maybe 60 dollars for each ton of hay you sold and still have hay for your own animals.

What do you have to lose? It costs little to at least try to harvest premium quality hay. If you succeed, you get a bonus. And if your hay doesn't qualify for a bonus, you simply feed the hay to your own animals, just like you would have done anyway.

No risk, high returns. Indeed, what do you have to lose?

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