

## Sample Hay Correctly

Forage tests can tell you the nutrient concentration in your hay. But only if the sample you collect accurately resembles your hay. Stay tuned to learn how to gather a good sample.

Nutrient concentration varies considerably in all forages. That is why I recommend hay testing be a regular part of your livestock operation.

There is one catch, however. For hay tests to be effective, your sample must accurately represent your hay. Reaching into a bale and pulling out a hunk of hay will not give you a good sample. Nor will gathering a single flake of hay.

The only effective method to sample long hay is by using a core sampler. If you don't have one, you can buy one from many ag supply catalogues and forage testing labs. Also, some local extension offices have hay probes available for loan.

Once you have a hay probe, use it to collect one core each from 15 to 20 bales that came from the same field and cutting. Collect your sample from the center of the twine end of the bales. Then combine all the samples from this group into one larger sample to send to the lab.

If there is decayed or moldy material that you will discard or your animals will not eat, do not include it in your sample. That way you will have a sample that is similar to the actual diet of your livestock. However, if you plan to sell the hay, then you need to include this less desirable material in your sample to accurately represent all the hay to be sold.

Follow these sampling techniques and you will get accurate nutrient analyses of your hay and be able to use it more effectively.

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