

WHAT IS THE RIGHT PRICE FOR YOUR HAY BALES?



1824 N St, Ste 102 • Auburn NE 68305
402-274-4755 • www.nemaha.unl.edu

Deciding on the correct price for your hay bales can be a challenging task for forage producers. The price of a bale of hay depends on several crucial factors, with bale weight and nutrient content standing out as the most significant. Additionally, the type of hay you are selling, whether it's alfalfa, corn stalk, or meadow grass, also determines its value.

Often, producers are uncertain about the exact weight of their bales. To obtain a general idea, a 4 × 4 bale typically weighs around 700 pounds, whereas 4 × 6 or 5 × 5 bales average about 1400 pounds, but this weight varies with the type of hay. To determine the precise weight of your hay bale, you can load your bales onto a truck and have them weighed at a nearby grain elevator, feed cooperatives, or truck stops equipped with scales.

Before you decide on how much to charge for your hay, it's essential to consider the costs associated with its production. This includes accounting for expenses related to land, equipment, seed, and fertilizer. To calculate fuel cost more precisely, you can break them down into a per-acre cost. This includes the expense of gallons consumed during raking, baling, loading, and hauling. To assist in this cost calculation, the University of Nebraska Extension publishes an annual custom rate guide (cap.unl.edu/customrates). This publication serves as a valuable resource for estimating the production costs of forage, helping producers establish a fair and competitive price for their hay bales.

For those seeking additional resources to estimate hay prices, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) produces the National Hay, Feed, and Seed Weekly Summary report. This report provides detailed information on the quantity of hay sold, including the price range. This information is categorized to cover different regions such as central, east, Platte Valley, and west Nebraska. One key point to note when examining these reports is that prices are typically expressed as "trade or ask per ton." The USDA also provides local and regional hay auction reports. You can visit www.ams.usda.gov/market-news/hay-reports to access these reports. In addition to this, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture has opened a "Hay and Forage Hotline" to connect buyers with sellers of hay, pasture, and other forage crops. Here, you can list your hay for sale and get a seller's list as well. The seller's list offers a database of seller names, contact information, the type of hay they sold, its price, and the quantity available. For producers looking to set a competitive price for their hay bales, this report can be immensely helpful. By considering these factors and utilizing these resources, you can make more informed pricing decisions, ultimately ensuring a successful hay bale transaction.

Feel free to visit the Nemaha County Extension office for recent reports and further information. You can also contact me at rlamichhane3@unl.edu or (402) 274-4755.

Ritika Lamichhane
Extension Educator
Nemaha County
October 2023