

AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES



**GREEN COUNTY
AGRICULTURE NEWS**

September 2009

**Cooperative
Extension Service**
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How much hay will your horses need this winter?

As horse owners go through the summer, they should start thinking about their hay supply for the upcoming winter feeding season. It appears in some areas that the supply of hay this year is much better than the past couple years, but now is the time for those who need to buy hay to make plans to do so.

The common question is how much hay will farmers need? The answer starts with and depends on several things. Firstly, how long will you need to feed? If conditions are such that you need to start feeding hay in mid-November and continue until the first of April, you will feed for about 150 days. The actual number will certainly vary with available fall pasture and when you can use pasture again in the spring.

Secondly, how big are your horses? Let's assume the average size of the horses in your care is 1,100 pounds. To get a reasonable estimate of how much your horses weigh, you can use a heart girth tape.

Thirdly, how much will each of your horses eat? Again, you need to make an assumption and most farmers commonly believe that the average adult horse will need to eat an amount equal to about two percent of its body weight per day.

Making these assumptions, you can now calculate that each adult horse would need to eat approximately 22 pounds each day, which is about 1.65 tons for 150 days. To make adjustments for waste or increased needs, it's reasonable for you to have a hay inventory of about 1.75 to 2 tons of hay per horse for the winter.

Source your hay now because it may be harder to find it later in the season and getting enough hay for your horses could become a real challenge.

Kentucky's Local Food Economy

We get a lot of press about our local food culture here in Kentucky. The local food economy has indeed grown quite a bit as our agriculture has adapted to changing consumer needs. Recent research with households in the Kentucky Food Consumer Survey suggests local foods are some of the hottest consumer tickets out there, especially for fresh produce, dairy products, meat and eggs.

We've seen growth in farm markets, wineries, Community Supported Agriculture groups, local produce and foods in our restaurants and grocery stores. Recent legislation has made it easier for on-farm processing, opening the floodgates for locally processed products. The "local" aspect is carrying a lot of currency with Kentucky consumers right now, especially for fresh products, but also for processed products. Agritourism, county fairs and festivals and on-farm markets fan the flame of interest in local products.

Diversity in a local food system economy is a good thing in that it promotes innovation and consumer choice. Many farmers are giving serious thought as to how they might or if they should jump into the mix.

The direct marketing culture has been dynamic in Kentucky, and it has received substantial support from Cooperative Extension, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and other agencies. There are numerous training and certification programs for micro and home processors, certified kitchens, as well as promotional programs through Kentucky Proud targeting restaurants, grocers and consumers.

With new marketing opportunities for farmers, come new challenges. Direct marketing involves new business models, new production systems, new requirements for addressing quality assurance and distribution. Marketing these products requires a new kind of attention to promotion and marketing. Legal and insurance considerations typically take on new dimensions in the direct-marketing world as well.

Many producers are smaller and can only seasonally market their products. Total production and marketing costs tend to be higher and subsequently are reflected in the prices.

So for consumers, as you're out at the farm markets and county fairs, and visiting your local restaurants and groceries, compare the local products to the alternatives. For many fresh products, there are obvious quality advantages for the local goods, and consumers are more directly contributing back to their local economy and supporting local farmers.

Measure Management

The four factors of production for agricultural businesses are often described as land, labor, capital and management. You can quantify the first three of these in specific units (acres, hours, dollars), and you can acquire additional quantities if you need them.

However, you can't quantify management; it does not have units. While you can hire managers, you can't buy management. In many surveys of farm and agribusiness owners, when asked what they need help with, they will often reply, management.

While you can't count or measure the level of management, you can observe traits that are common to top managers. The following describes a few of the most important traits.

First, good managers know their cost of production. They know what it costs to produce a bushel of corn, a certain level of milk, a ton of hay or a feeder calf. While balance sheets and income statements are necessary indicators of the overall financial health of the business, it's important to know the relative profitability of different enterprises or commodities. Good managers, regardless of the industry, want to know the costs of producing their product. Good managers know the difference between the market price and their cost of production is the profit that will make the business sustainable.

Another trait common to top managers is that they set goals based on a clearly defined mission statement. The mission statement answers the question, "Why are we doing this?" and the good manager understands that everyone in the business, employees, family members, and partners understand and agree with the answer to that question.

Finally, goals are specific statements about what needs to happen to fulfill the mission. These goals should be SMART. In this case SMART is an acronym to help us remember that goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timed. Good managers often post their mission statements and goals so that everyone in the business knows the direction the business is headed.

"Improving the welfare of dairy cattle: Implications of freestall housing on behavior and health"

by **Marina von Keyserlingk and Dan Weary**
at the **University of British Columbia**

Cow comfort directly impacts not only milk production but also the health (decrease incidence of lameness) and well-being of dairy cattle. Cows prefer softer lying surfaces with more bedding and spend more time lying down in well-bedded stalls. Freestalls that are more comfortable have higher occupancy rates and are more likely to contain feces!!! Cows should spend about 12 hours daily lying down but remember the remaining 12 hours they are standing. Thus, additional research is needed to design standing surfaces which are soft and dry. We know that cows prefer some stalls over others, but we need to be reminded that these preferences impact stocking densities within facilities.

The amount of feedbunk space impacts feeding behavior. Essentially, less aggressive behavior at the feedbunk (i.e. more feedbunk space) is associated with increased feeding activity and less health problems especially in submissive cows. The debate regarding headlocks versus post and rail feeding barrier continues. Cows are displaced more from the feeding area when stocking rates increase and cows spend less time eating. Cows are more likely displaced from headlocks (21% less displacements) than post and rail feeding barriers. Submissive cows (heifers and fresh cows) benefit the most from additional bunk and freestall space.

*Now is a good
time to have your
soil tested.*

Soil test \$5.00

Farmer's Market

This year's community market has had limited success and we hope to be able to improve that for next year. The problem hasn't been on the consumer side, but on not having enough producers to sell fresh produce. Any individual interested in selling at a Green County Farmer's Market we will be having a planning meeting on October 15, at 6:30 p.m. central time at the Green County Extension Office. This meeting is to engage producers and exchange ideas on how we can make a local farmer's market work in Green County. Anyone interested in selling at a local market is encouraged to attend.

*If you have any questions regarding this newsletter,
please contact me.*



Brian S. Newman,
County Extension Agent
for Agriculture &
Natural Resources

County Agricultural Investment Program

Producers will be able to pick up applications for the C.A.I.P program at the Green County Cooperative Extension Office starting on September 9. There are several different programs that will be available to agriculture producers including: diversification, dairy, cattle handling, genetics, forage improvement, farm structure and commodity handling, fencing, energy, goat and sheep, water, and technology. There are several changes from what has taken place in the past. Some of the changes to this year's program is that it is not retroactive, receipts cannot be dated any earlier than October 1, 2009. Labor is **no** longer a cost shareable item. There will be educational requirements for many of the project areas that will be required before checks are issued to the producer. If you select to participate in one of the categories, you will **not** be able to change it at a later date. All receipts must be turned in by May 20, 2010, to the Green County Cooperative Extension Office. There will be an educational meeting held on September 15, at 6:00 p.m. at the Green County Extension Office to explain many of the new regulations and new investment areas that will be available to producers and answer any questions that there may be.

Upcoming Educational Opportunities

C.A.I.P. Informational meeting- September 15, 6:00 p.m. Green County Extension Office

Agriculture Advancement Council Meeting- October 6, 11:00 a.m. Green County Extension Office. Featured speaker with be Dr. Les Anderson.

Genetic Improvement- October 13, 6:30 p.m. Green County Extension Office. Featured speaker will be Dr. Darrh Bullock.

Farmer's Market Producer planning meeting- October 15, 6:30 p.m. Green County Extension Office.

Forage Educational Meeting- October 27, 6:00 p.m. Exie Fire Department. Featured speaker will be Dr. Ray Smith.

Farm Structure and Commodity Handling- November 3, 6:30 p.m. Green County Extension Office

Beef Quality Assurance Training-November 5, 6:30 p.m. Green County Extension Office

Fencing Improvement Program- November 9, 6:30 p.m. Green County Extension Office

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Cooperative Extension Service

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