

Make Hay and Spray-Smother-Spray in May

Quality hay and grazing comes from leaves. In grass, when seed heads emerge, energy begins to shift to stalk strength (more stemmy hay) and seed development which takes energy away from leaves. As stems increase, hay quality decreases. Therefore, early cutting of cool season grass provides the best quality. Good quality dry matter does not mean waiting for tonnage. Although, you may be harvesting fewer bales in May you will also be storing and hauling fewer nutrition-empty (straw like) bales this winter. Another advantage is extending vegetative growth into summer, delaying summer slump.

The ideal harvest timing is boot which is before the seed heads emerge. Good drying weather is one concern with early harvest. Hay should be at 18% to 16% moisture for round bales before baling for safe storage. Another consideration is incorporating baleage, higher moisture hay wrapped in plastic, which takes on feeding quality of silage on some hay acres. There is an article on baleage at the following MU website: <http://extension.missouri.edu/news/DisplayStory.aspx?N=1856>

May is also the window to begin the process of converting K31 fescue fields to novel endophyte fescue in September. The process involves a spray-smother-spray program where glyphosate is applied 10 to 14 days prior to planting a smother summer annual grass, such as pearl millet followed by spraying glyphosate 10 to 14 days prior to planting novel endophyte fescue in September.

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