

## Winter Feed Cost Budget for Beef Cows

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Pasture is gone and it's still 100 days to green-up. So, what will it cost to feed cows the remainder of the winter? This is a moving target, but certainly a record corn crop and relatively abundant hay supply have helped lower feed cost from recent years. The new price relationships may have a few surprises.

The table below is our attempt to standardize estimates of daily feed cost per cow for planning purposes with three defined levels of hay quality, given market conditions in early December. For each hay category multiple rations have been balanced using commonly available feed ingredients such as corn, corn gluten feed, soy hull pellets, etc. to meet the requirements of cows in late gestation or mid-lactation. Multiple rations allow us to compare costs with different ingredients. Feed cost estimates are for ingredient prices only and do not include additional costs of feed preparation, storage, transportation, or feed waste. Supplement costs across all the rations averages about 10.5 cents per pound within a narrow range.

Pricing hay for budgeting purposes is a challenge because the hay market is complicated and far from perfect. However, one should expect to pay more for higher quality hay. For purchased hay, we used \$50, \$75, and \$95 per ton for poor, fair, and good quality, respectively. For raised hay the estimate is \$60 per ton, roughly the total cost of production.

Some key observations from this exercise:

- Winter feeding is a substantial cost component for any cow herd. Using a 100 day feeding period we estimate ingredient costs for all of the scenarios to range from \$113 to \$164 per cow for spring calvers and \$131 to \$184 per cow for fall calvers.
- Obviously, with lower quality hay more pounds of supplement are required to maintain cow body condition. Somewhat surprising is that total feed cost is lower with lesser quality hay because of the spreads in purchased hay prices. This was often not true in the recent period of higher priced corn and co-products for supplement ingredients.
- One school of thought is to charge raised hay to the cow herd at the same price as the cash hay market. But, the financial dynamics for feeding raised hay actually work differently because it is an intermediate product of the farm not a cash crop. The cost of home-raised hay is the same regardless of quality. The financial hit comes with higher supplement costs. With current markets, the difference is about \$0.50 per cow per day between good and poor quality hay.

These estimates are based on assumptions that apply to many farms in west central Missouri, but may not be applicable to your specific situation. Consult with your regional extension livestock specialist for more detailed information.

Spring calving cows, maintenance			
Hay Quality	Supplement lbs	Feed cost*	
		Buy hay	Raise hay
Poor	10.2	\$1.53	\$1.63
Fair	6.6	\$1.55	\$1.37
Good	2.3	\$1.64	\$1.13

Fall calving cows, maintenance			
Hay Quality	Supplement lbs	Feed cost*	
		Buy hay	Raise hay
Poor	12.2	\$1.73	\$1.84
Fair	8.7	\$1.83	\$1.64
Good	4.2	\$1.83	\$1.31

\*Hay and supplement, \$ per cow per day