

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

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### *Forage Analysis*

As temperatures just continue to rise, we are reminded that it truly is summertime in Kansas. While some folks are not fans of the scorching Kansas heat, I hear over and over again “Well at least it’s good haying weather”. I know many producers have been running some hard hours lately trying to get hay up, and put away. As this continues we receive a lot of questions through our office about how we can assist producers with forage analysis.

In the extension office we have the ability to send your forage samples off to labs to be analyzed. Once we receive those results we work with producers to understand what those results mean. Whether you are going to be selling that hay and can get a premium for higher protein, or you’re planning on feeding it to your own cows knowing its nutritional content helps on a multitude of levels.

So the first step to beginning the process is collecting a good sample. There are several methods for sampling baled hay. The best technique according to Oregon State University is to use a mechanical coring probe made specifically for this purpose. The serrated edge is placed on the side of a hay bale that is most resistant to puncture (usually the round side of a round hay bale or the small end of a square bale) and a sample is obtained by drilling. The sample should be as representative of the composition of the hay bales as possible. The process is repeated on several hay bales within the sampling lot. Hay from different fields or cutting times need to be sampled separately. A forage probe can be borrowed from the Extension Office.

If your management plan includes keeping the hay and feeding it, the Extension office also has the capabilities of helping you build a ration to best fit the needs of your operation. Whether that plan includes Cow/calf, first time heifers, stocker calves, etc. We have the software capability to build a ration specific to your needs.

The objective of analytical testing of forages and feedstuffs is to improve our ability to meet the animal’s nutrient requirements and ultimately predict animal performance. While gathering the samples can be a pain, knowing exactly what you’re feeding and making sure we are meeting the cattle’s needs (not too much, not too little) is way more efficient in the long run.

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Lindsay Shorter, at [lindsayshorter@ksu.edu](mailto:lindsayshorter@ksu.edu), or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.