



**Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
MONROE COUNTY

Division of Extension - Monroe County

206 South K Street

Sparta, WI 54656

Phone: (608)269-8722

Fax: (608)366-1809

Wisconsin Relay: 711

## *NEWS RELEASE*

May 15, 2020

Contact: Bill Halfman, UW Extension Agriculture Agent

Phone: 608-269-8722

### **Considerations for Buying and Selling Standing Hay**

“How much is standing hay worth?” is a common question at the Extension office during the growing season. The answer to that question has several variables that should be taken into consideration.

Buying and selling by actual weight is the most accurate, and fair way for hay transactions. Having access to a scale to weigh every load is ideal, but weighing every load is often not possible. Weighing an agreed upon number of loads or bales, and then counting the loads or bales, can be used to determine a weight for the transaction. If access to a scale is not an option and harvesting as haylage an estimate can be obtained by determining the number of feet of bag filled or number of feet filled in an upright silo using tables, charts, or spreadsheet tools to determine a best estimate of feed tonnage to complete the sale. Regardless of how you determine the weight harvested, you will need to adjust the price based on moisture level.

UW Extension produces a hay price report that can serve as a pricing starting point, but needs to be adjusted for harvest costs, moisture and other criteria. The report is based on public and private quality tested hay sales and reports from the Midwest and can be found at the UW Extension Forages page: <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/forage/> This report is updated twice a month. The Wisconsin Custom Rate Survey can serve as a resource to help determine harvest costs per acre and can be found at: <https://tinyurl.com/ydzh6c5g>.

A transaction by weight would be as simple as tons harvested from a field at the agreed upon price, minus harvest costs for the total acres harvested, based on an agreed upon price per acre from the custom rate guide for the net payment.

Buying and selling by the acre introduces many potential sources of yield variability. Age of the stand, weather, rainfall, soil fertility level, insect pest pressure, and soil type all have an impact on yield and variability across fields. There is not a practical, accurate way to estimate yield of a standing hay field. If this option is chosen for the whole year a per acre rate can be determined utilizing a row-crop land rental rate as a starting point, and including a fee to the land owner for a pro-rated value of the establishment costs plus other annual maintenance expenses that the owner is purchasing such as fertilizer.

It is important to keep in mind the amount of fertilizer alfalfa needs to maintain good yields and maintain stand life. As an example, if a field soil test is optimum and has a realistic yield goal of 3.5 to 4.5 tons per acre, the recommendation would be for 240 pounds of potassium, 50 pounds of phosphorus and 25 pounds of sulfur.



**Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
MONROE COUNTY

Division of Extension - Monroe County

206 South K Street

Sparta, WI 54656

Phone: (608)269-8722

Fax: (608)366-1809

Wisconsin Relay: 711

## *NEWS RELEASE*

It is time well spent to put together a list of expenses the buyer and seller are contributing to the production and harvest of the hay to determine a reasonable price. The agreement should also be put in writing to prevent disputes after the fact. In the end this is a business negotiation, and the best price is what the buyer and seller agree on using a reasonable process to make an informed decision.

###