
Animal Science

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CORN VERSUS HAY, COMPARE THE COSTS WHEN PURCHASING FEED FOR COWHERD

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Beef cattle producers often face critical decisions when purchasing feed, especially when feedstuff supplies are limited. One important question is whether to purchase hay or corn to most economically meet the energy needs of cattle.

Energy is the feed nutrient that is needed in most quantity (except for water, which is assumed to be available). “Total Digestible Nutrients” (TDN) is the most convenient estimate of energy. On the average, it takes 9 pounds of hay to supply the same amount of TDN that 5 pounds of corn supplies.

Therefore, in terms of energy, 5 pounds of corn can replace 9 pounds of hay, but is it economical?

If corn is selling at \$3.00 per bushel and there are 56 pounds of corn per bushel then simple division reveals that corn is selling for 5.36 cent/pound. Five (5) pounds of corn is worth 26.79 cents.

If hay is selling for \$50 per ton, the price per pounds is 2.5 cents. But, it takes 9 pounds of hay to equal 5 pounds of corn. Multiply 9 pounds of hay x 2.5 cents per pound to show that the relative feeding value is 22.5 cents.

From this, one may conclude that it is more economical to feed the pounds of hay rather than substitute with corn. Calculate the costs before decisions are made.

Additional points:

- Use your own figures to make certain the same conclusion applies in your case.
- Corn should not replace more than 50 percent of the forage in most cow-calf rations.
- Do not forget other nutrients, such as protein; for example, some hay may be higher in protein and therefore, more valuable to the producer.

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