
ASSESS HAY NEEDS EARLY

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Producers are encouraged to not wait until they are running low on hay supplies in the winter to start looking for hay. Assess hay needs in time so that additional hay can be located or, if necessary, cattle numbers can be reduced. The "cow unit" method is a quick way for assessing hay needs. Allow about 25 to 30 pounds of hay per cow unit (30 is good, because it builds in a little for wastage). Count each 1000 pounds of cattle as a "unit," or count each cow as a unit, each calf as about one-half unit and each bull as 2 units. Decide how many days hay will need to be fed hay (100 to 120 days would be typical). Multiply the number of cow units by the pounds of hay per cow unit and multiply this by the number of days they will be fed. Then match hay needs with the amount of hay in storage. Encourage your producers that need to buy hay to get it done now.

Example:

50 cows x 30 lbs of hay per cow x 100 days = 150,000 lbs

If your bales weigh 1000 lbs, then $150,000 \text{ lbs} \div 1000 = 150$ bales needed to make it through winter