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TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE



It Will Pay, to Test your Hay

Well its dang sure a muddy mess out in the fields and pastures. All the rain last fall made it the second wettest year on record and the moisture continues as we started 2019. We had more rain in 2015 than 2018 but I don't believe it was as muddy then as it is now. Wheat pastures are just sitting there and most producers have gotten very little grazing from the winter pastures, therefore stocker calf numbers are low. Hay is in high demand and very pricey to boot. There is still some hay out there for sale but getting scarcer each passing day. I talked to a rancher the other day who is feeding lots of hay and he said his cows look like crap and wanted to know what he should do. The first thing I told him to do is test his hay so he would know how much and what type of supplement to feed to get his cows back into decent shape. Calving season is just around the corner and cows should be in good shape when it starts. If you don't test your hay then you have no idea of the protein and energy content and therefore no idea how many pounds of supplements to feed to meet the daily requirements of that animal. A cow can only eat 30 to 40 pounds of dry matter a day, so it doesn't matter if you are drowning them in hay, they are still going to be short on nutrients needed for maintenance and fetal development, and ultimately lactation, if they are cheated on protein and energy with sorry hay. One should test their hay every summer or at least prior to going into winter, it's just good business. I have a couple of core samplers you can check out along with testing forms here at the office if needed. If nothing else roll a bale out and take some samples by hand, or just pull it out of the bale and send in, it beats not doing one at all. Sometimes we can't help making or buying sorry hay but we can test it to know just how sorry it is and how we need to make up for the lack of nutrients it does not supply. There are nutrient requirement tables for cows available here at the office or go online and find one. OSU has a good one I use that you can print off. These requirement tables look at cows in different stages of production and estimate how much dry matter they will consume and how many pounds of protein and energy they need each day. So check it out and stop short-changing your cows or wasting money by over supplementing. If nothing else use this as a rule of thumb, a 1100 pound lactating cow will consume on average 32 lbs of dry matter per day so I always wanted my hay to test at least 10% or above on Crude protein, and 55% or above on TDN(energy). Anyway look at the tables and find the pounds of protein and energy she needs according to her weight, stage of production, and dry matter intake and figure accordingly. If you have any questions give me a call and I will walk you through it.

Marty Morgan, Ag Agent