

FORAGE TESTING & MARKETING PROGRAM

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Two thousand and three marks the 14th year for the Kentucky Department of Agriculture for testing forages. We continue to strive to offer a quality service to producers at the very least cost possible. After all these years we continue to charge only \$10.00 per lot or cutting and have expanded our services to try to meet the needs of our forage and livestock producers. In January 2002, we introduced the testing of haylages and have expanded this to cover most of the haylage crops harvested in Kentucky. In cooperation with The University of Kentucky Extension Service, the department continues to offer a least cost ration-balancing program for beef cattle. The department once again offers the use of the Mobile testing vans to help promote and educate producers about the forage-testing program. The vans can be scheduled by extension personnel for events such as county fairs, field days, livestock meetings, etc. The Internet has become a reliable tool for most of us. In August 1999, the department developed an Internet web-site (www.kyagr.com) that became an agriculture information center and a user-friendly marketing center that includes forages. This site allows the producers to have their forages listed whether in traditional square bales, large rectangle bales, rolls, or haylages. Farmers can have a digital picture, nutrient analysis information, as well as the physical description placed on the Internet when the forage is tested.

As mentioned earlier, until January 2001 hay crops (legume, grass, and legume/grass mixes) were the products that could be tested. If you notice the title of this article, it is now named "The Kentucky Forage Testing & Marketing Program". The program name was changed because of adding **Haylages** (legume, grass, small grains, and mixed legume/grass) to our line-up of products that the department is able to test. This is accomplished by the use of NIR (Near-Infrared Spectrophotometer) technology. Much work was and continues to be done to insure accurate and consistent results are produced for both the haylages and hay crops that are analyzed and tested. The department forage testing NIR laboratory is certified by the **NFTA** (National Forage Testing Association). The NFTA is the association which monitors member forage testing laboratories whether using "Wet-lab" or NIR methodology. It should be noted that all forage testing laboratories that apply for certification doesn't meet the high standards set for repeatability and do not receive certification.

TESTING FORAGES

According to the most recent Kentucky Agriculture Statistics 2001-2002 edition, forage crops ranked second with a cash value of \$391 million. This makes up 27% of the total crop values second only to tobacco which is 34% of the total crop values. This is significant to Kentucky farmers as well as the overall economy in Kentucky.

With a \$391 million dollar crop, forages are no doubt a huge player in our livestock and forage economy. Testing of these forages should be a goal of our producers, which can translate to more value added through marketing or livestock enterprises.

Getting your forages tested in Kentucky is easier than in any other state I know of. No other state or private laboratory offers more services for such affordable prices.


To get your forages tested all you have to do is pick-up the phone and call **The Hay & Grain Branch** at a toll free number **(800) 248-4628** and schedule an appointment to have a department staff person come to your farm and collect the hay samples. If the producer chooses to list his hay or haylage for sale, a visual appraisal of the hay evaluating characteristics such as color, odor, leafiness, maturity, etc. can be done by the KDA staff person. If the producer wishes, a color digital picture of the forage can be taken at this time. When the forage samples are analyzed, the samples to be listed for sale will then be added to the KY Department of Agriculture's web-site (www.kyagr.com).

The analysis will then be mailed to the producer and the respective County Extension Agent for Agriculture. We also have e-mail and fax capabilities upon request.

Approximately 70% of all forages tested by the department is not listed for sale, but will be used by the producer to formulate rations for livestock.

After receiving the analysis and you decide that a least cost ration for your livestock enterprises is needed, or if you have questions concerning your analysis just give us a call at our toll free number.

Figure 1: Example of Forage Analysis



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
DIVISION OF REGULATION AND INSPECTION

HAY AND GRASS BRANCH
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FRANKFORT KY 40601


Phone: (606) 248-4628
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01/30/2003

NIR ANALYSIS REPORT

ALLEN JOHNSON
117 EVERGREEN CT
MT S TERLING KY 40363

COUNTY: MONTGOMERY
PHONE: (606) 488-1105



LOT NUMBER: 311-001-001-01	CROP: ALF-GRASS	DATE SAMPLED: 03/20/2002
CUTTING DATE: 06/15/2002	INITIAL Amt./Acre: 12.00	NO. of BALES: 500
DATE BALED: 06/17/2002	CUTTING NUMBER 2	BALE SIZE: 14/18/36
STORAGE: BARN	GRADE: FEEDER	BALE WT./lb.: 50

COLOR: GREEN	FOREIGN MATERIAL(%): 1.00% CHICKWEED
ODOR: FRESH	INJURIOUS FOREIGN MATERIAL: NONE
STEM TO LEAF: GOOD	LEAF RETENTION: 75-90%
STEM TEXTURE: MED-MED	MOLD: NONE
GRASS MATURITY: VEGETATIVE	PREBERVATIVE: NONE
LEGUME MATURITY: 10% BLOOM	RAIN DAMAGE: NO
DRYING AGENT: NONE	

	AS RECEIVED BASIS	DRY MATTER BASIS
RFV		115.80
CRUDE PROTEIN %	18.20	20.80
ACID DET. FIBER %	31.30	35.60
NEUT. DET. FIBER %	42.80	49.00
MOISTURE %	12.70	0.00
DRY MATTER %	87.30	100.00
TDN EST. %	58.20	57.50
NE/LACT. MCAL/LB	0.60	0.68
NE/MAINT. MCAL/L	0.40	0.58
NE/GAIN. MCAL/LB	0.28	0.30

COMMENTS: Easy Access to load Semi-Trucks

FORAGE MARKETING PROGRAM

As the landscape of Kentucky agriculture continues to change, the demand and need for high quality forages has never been greater. Challenges to produce high quality forages are still prevalent in Kentucky, but in saying this I have witnessed the quality of good high quality alfalfa and alfalfa-grass mixes continue to excel.

According to producers we have contacted, hay has been sold in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Missouri, Ohio, Illinois, Florida, Indiana, and Virginia. This is surely proof that Kentucky hay is of good quality and in strong demand.

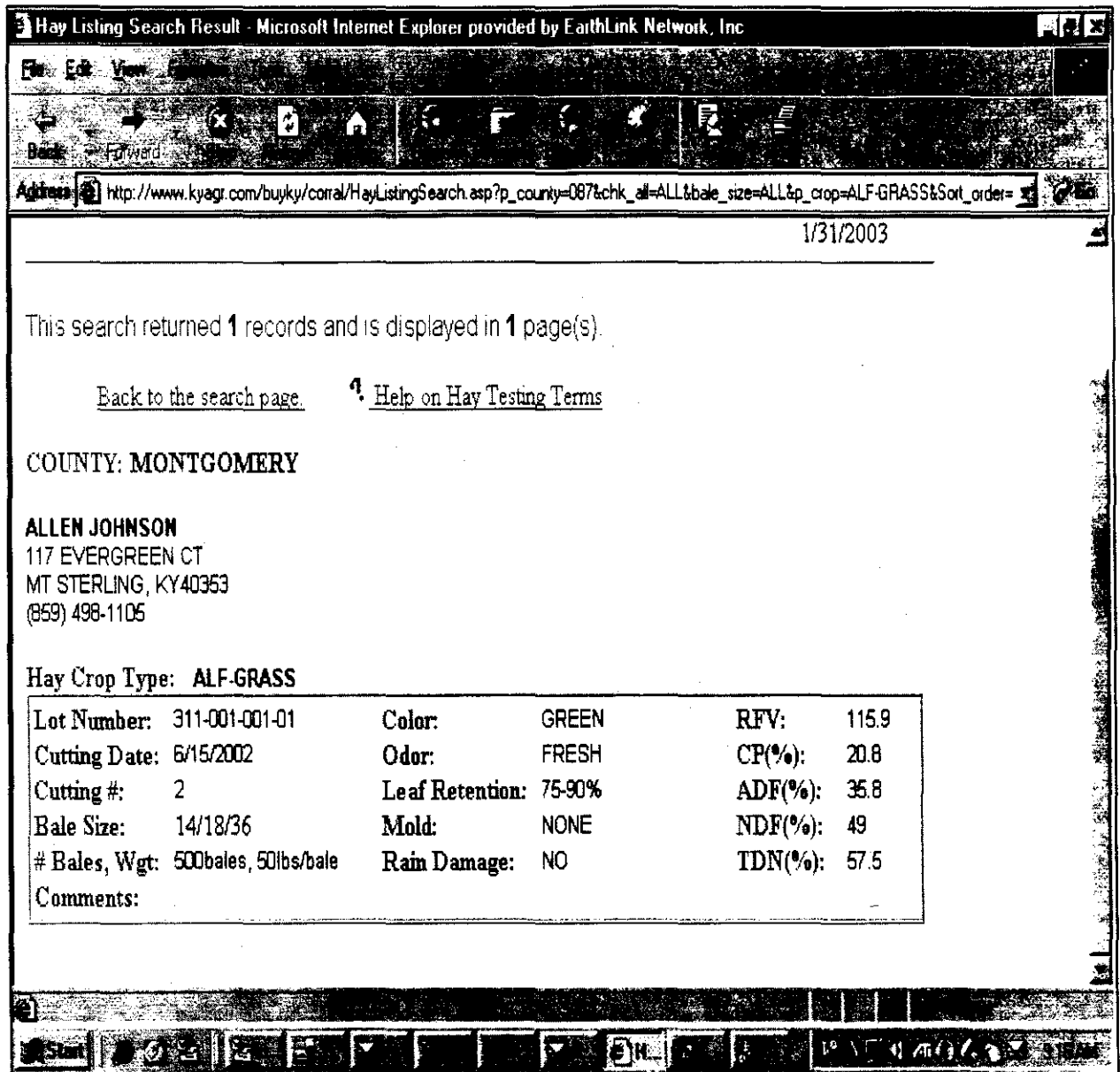
Producing, harvesting, and storing quality alfalfa and alfalfa-grass mixes, is only half of the task at hand when trying to incorporate cash hay as part of ones farming enterprise. Knowing how, when, whom, and at what price you are to market your forage crops is the other half of the equation. These are three items that are very important and a good basis to ensure a successful forage marketing program. First, knowing who your target customer is going to be is foremost. Satisfying the customer and trying to retain him as a repeat customer, should be imperative. Secondly, know where your market is. Are you going to sell to the horse market, or Dairyman out-of-state or in-state? These are questions that each individual will have to answer for himself. Third, and just as important, is you must know your product. By knowing your product and having it tested, you as the producer and the customer has a basic starting point in establishing a fair and equitable price. As mentioned earlier, the Department of Agriculture Hay & Grain has the testing facilities and Internet web-site to assist you in this endeavor.

INTERNET WEB-SITE

Many of you in attendance today have access to the bulletin board of the world, better known as the Internet. This technology that is in most of our homes and offices allows for tremendous information and purchasing abilities without ever leaving our desks. The departments web-site (www.kyagr.com) is another part of this advanced technology. The original concept was and remains to provide as much Agriculture information possible and also allows producers to market their own products on this site.

One of the features of this site is the "Hay and Haylages For Sale" page. After the forage sample and pertinent information is gathered and the producer asks that his forage samples be listed on the web-site, we add the forage analysis and the physical description to the world wide web.

Figure 2: Example of "Hay For Sale" on the Web-Site



SUMMARY

At the time of this writing, I am receiving approximately 5-7 calls per day inquiring about where they might find hay to buy. Just about every lot that was tested and listed for sale is sold. As most of you know, hay supplies is very short a this time in Kentucky, and all over the United States. Forage testing is a tool that is utilized by both forage and livestock producers to maximize profits. You would never think of going to the local feed store and buying a ton of feed and not knowing what the nutrient contents were in the feed. It should be the same way with your forages, since forages make up a large part of the diet of most livestock enterprises. Forage testing should be a priority for hay and haylage producers as well as livestock producers. When you decide to have your forages tested we at the Kentucky Dept. of Agriculture are ready to assist you in any way possible. Call us at (800) 248-4628.