

# Agronomist sees new approaches

## to hay marketing

HERSHEY — Modern production technology has resulted in much higher alfalfa hay yields in Wisconsin according to Dwayne Rohweder, University of Wisconsin's extension forage agronomist.

"However, the use of this improved technology has also caused hay surplus which can't be absorbed through present hay market facilities," Rohweder said, "so we've developed new approaches to market this hay."

As a result of a recent hay marketing study in Wisconsin, we've been able to characterize the hay market in Wisconsin, Rohweder continued.

For example, major hay sources were crop and dairy farms while the greatest share of hay sold was by in-state and out-of-state dairy persons. Nearly three-fourths of the hay bought was from storage and 90 percent was shipped by truck.

Furthermore, 75 percent of the dealers' hay was sold

more than 100 miles from their place of business or out of state.

The study also revealed that dealers identified color as the major factor influencing price, followed by maturity. On the other hand, farmers bought hay according to its leafiness, percent legume, and maturity.

One of the programs developed to bring hay producers and buyers together during an emergency was the

Wisconsin Hay Hotline. An analysis of two years' transactions showed that farmers do buy hay according to quality and desire a more formal market system based on quality.

This project initiated a computer network facility in county extension offices throughout the state of Wisconsin, Rohweder reported.

Hay purchase practices of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences - University of Wisconsin-Madison - were also revised this year, the specialist noted.

Two hay grades from the American Forage and Grassland Council hay standards are currently being used. Bids are let quarterly and are based on chemical specifications for each grade. A premium and discount system is used to reward improved quality.

New hay grades and new methods to reduce bulk and transportation costs have been used to improve hay purchase programs, Rohweder concluded. Continued work is underway to formalize the hay market.

## Silage to continue important as feed

HERSHEY — The production of silage as an important source of livestock feed will continue in the 1980's with few changes from the practices of the 1970's.

Improvements in structures and equipment will take place, and some changes in management of facilities will be needed, said Roger Grout, Extension agricultural engineer at Penn State.

The new item for silage packages is the use of a pressing machine to push silage into a king-sized

plastic bag. These bags are eight feet in diameter and 100 feet long, holding about 100 tons of silage.

"Preliminary trials indicate excellent preservation of silage. At Penn State, the silage in bags has stayed at a temperature of about 90°F. to give good retention of crop quality and availability of protein," the agricultural engineer points out.

He notes that with any system, bagging has some problems. At present, feeding and handling silage out of the bags has not been

perfected. There has been considerable damage to the plastic bags by farm animals, people, and rodents, with resulting spoilage.

"The filled bags are too large to be moved, so silage removal is carried out by cutting away the plastic bag, using a tractor scoop for loading," Grout emphasized.

It is desirable to fill the bags on a paved area to prevent contamination by dirt under the bag, he added.

## More forage additives

HERSHEY — During the 1980's, farmers will make increasing use of chemical additives and preservatives in their forage program.

This prediction was made by S. J. Hartung, manager of factory marketing for Deere Company, at the 20th Anniversary Forage Conference held this week in Hershey.

"The economics must be proven, but the digestibility of roughages such as straw and low quality hay can be considerably improved by treatment with chemicals such as ammonia or sodium hydroxide," Hartung emphasized.

The Deere Company official stated that we may even now be seeing the beginning of a trend to use chemicals in the field to maintain or improve the quality of the harvested crop.

Organic acids and anhydrous ammonia are already used to safely bale partially cured hay. This reduces leaf loss and results in higher quality.

"We have known for years that freshly cut alfalfa can be squeezed to release high protein juices. When processed, these juices become a high protein concentrate that can be fed to animals or consumed by humans," he said.

Some people have speculated that alfalfa juice may be handled similar to the way bulk milk is handled today.

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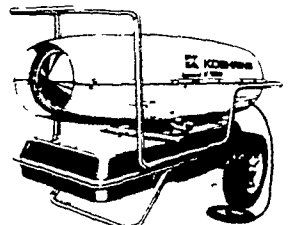
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