

# Nazareth Farmer Learns That Drying Can Lead To Some Really Great Bales Of Hay

(Continued from Page 1)

farm, reveals the "secrets" to growing high-quality hay — hay that can net a premium price at any auction.

"You know, you can grow bad hay as easily as you can grow good hay," he says, as he lifts a bale of alfalfa-orchardgrass back onto a pallet. But the Nazareth-area crops farmer points out that how hay is baled and dried down can affect the product's price substantially.

The secret is to remove the hay from the field when it is ready. He has baled hay on wet, gray mornings. Then, after a fresh cut, the leaves — a vital source of feed protein — remain intact on the stem, before the bales are dried.

The variety the farmer selects to grow is important, according to Bieber. Growers should look for a product that would make best use of the soil and environment — and it should contain a thin stem area.

The single most critical element to good hay-making? Dry it as fast and efficiently as possible, according to the haymaker.

Bieber has proven his own methods of drying down hay have paid off. Not only does he have to turn away customers for his premium hay, but his hay has consistently placed in champion classes at the Ag Progress Days Hay Show held during Ag Progress at Rockspring in August.

Last year, Bieber placed first in Class 14, alfalfa grass mixed — later cutting. This class features a mixture of alfalfa and grass with more than 10 percent but not more than 50 percent grasses.

He also placed first in Class 20, mixed hay. This class features a hay sample of mixed hay with more than 50 percent grasses. This mixture contains 50 percent or more grass in combination with alfalfa, clover, or birds-foot trefoil.

Bieber, retired but still working part-time for Chrin, Inc. excavating company in Easton, purchased the farm about 50 years ago. The farm used to be a large potato and crop farm.

At the farm, of 88 acres, about 65 are tillable. With additional rented



Robert Bieber, with his Jack Russell terrier Mitze, has learned how to dry hay inexpensively, which has resulted in better prices for his hay. Photo by Andy Andrews

acreage, Bieber tills a total of 100 acres.

About 60 of the conventionally and minimally tilled acreage are in alfalfa and alfalfa-orchardgrass mix. Of the 60, half are pure alfalfa and the other half alfalfa-orchardgrass. The balance of the tillable acres are in corn.

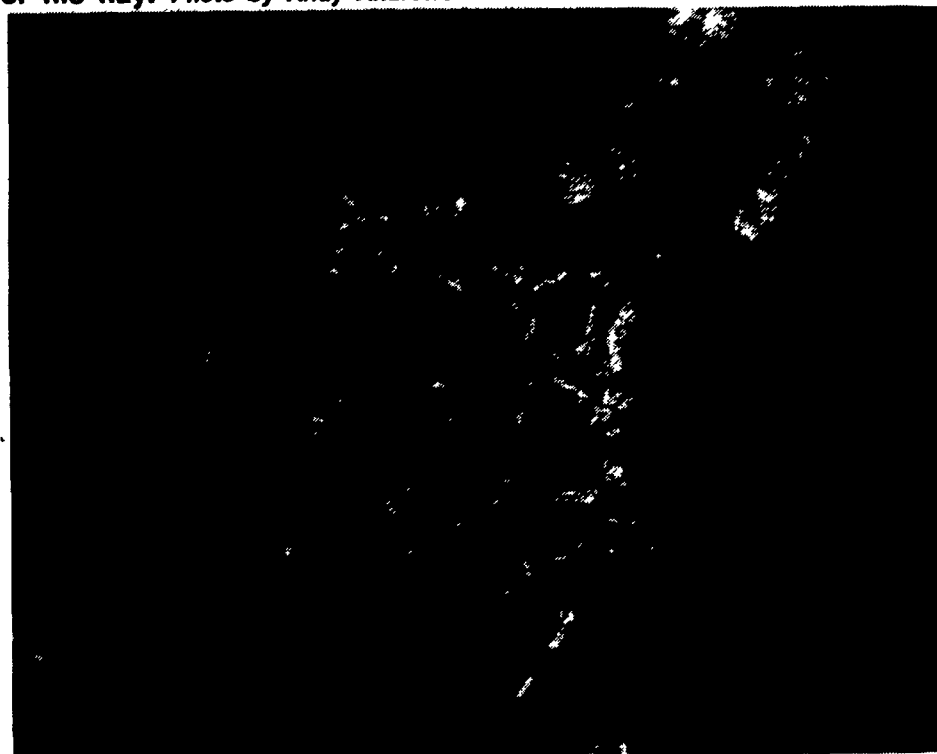
With the alfalfa-orchardgrass mix, Bieber is able to get about four good cuttings a year. The mix averages about 80 bales to the acre.

With the straight alfalfa, about 90-110 bales per acre are possible.

The hay is cut and is allowed to dry. Bieber uses a tedder once or twice to remove the morning dew. The alfalfa is square-baled (three feet in length) at about 25-30 percent moisture.

The alfalfa grass mixtures are baled at 18-20 percent moisture.

All bales, however, are taken through a modified New Holland oil-fueled crop drier that burns oil at about



Bieber's hay has lots of leaf material.

five gallons per hour. The hot air furnace takes in hot air from a connected structure and is taken through a "trench" underneath an 8-foot by 8-foot by 38-foot precast concrete-walled structure with an open roof. The bales are stacked on pallets (600-bale capacity). The forced air, from a 5-horsepower motor, is delivered at temperatures about 200-205 degrees. The air is forced from the delivery trench through the bottom of the bales. The top is open to allow moisture to escape.

When stored, a tarp is used to cover the bales. Tarp is also wedged in between the pallets and the wall surface to act as an insulator and to ensure the air moves directly up through the bales.

The drying shed structure is the "smartest investment I made in my life," said Bieber.

The structure, built in 1987, costs about 7,000, not including the cost of the drier. The drier cost about \$1,500.

All bales must be dried for about 24 hours before they are ready to be stacked in a nearby barn and then shipped.

The bales are in sizzle twin

(Turn to Page 12)



All bales, however, are taken through a modified New Holland oil-fueled crop drier that burns oil at about five gallons per hour. Here, Bieber checks out the motor.