

# Making Hay

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Most of us are familiar with the phrase “making hay while the sun shines.” It is very appropriate. The summer months, with more sunshine, is the time to harvest hay for the winter. Hay is the essential winter food source for livestock such as cattle, horse, sheep and goats.

The predominant types of grass hay in the United States is rye grass, timothy, brome, fescue, orchard grass, and legumes such as alfalfa and clover.

Weather conditions are an important factor in hay production. Quality hay includes both leaf and seed material. Hay raised under drought conditions contains less of both. Hay harvested too wet carries the possibility of rot and mold which can produce toxins harmful to livestock. Hay baled too wet can result in spontaneous combustion. If you spot burned hay, this could be the culprit. But farmers are generally aware of the possibility and try to avoid baling damp hay.

Not that many years ago making hay was very labor intensive and required a “crew” of workers. It was ideal work for young people, and was a major source of income for generations of teenagers. It was the equivalent of today's gyms and workout centers. The equipment was much different as well.

Most teenagers had their own “hay hook”, a curved metal device with a handle ideal for spiking and lifting a bale of hay. Prior to more modern equipment, the first hay balers produced “small” bales of hay weighing roughly 50-70 pounds. With “round balers”, which were common in our area, bales were dropped on the ground, requiring lifting onto a “hay wagon” which were flat-bottomed wagons without sides, but with a front and back, on which the hay was stacked.

Other farmers used “square bales” which were pushed from the baler directly to the hay wagon and picked up by workers and stacked on the wagon. In both methods they had to be stored for winter use in “old-style” barns which included a “hay loft” (essentially a second floor in the barn). The bales needed to be stacked in an orderly fashion to maximize the use of space.

During the winter feedings, small round bales were “unrolled” to maximize feeding space, while square bales were in the form of “flakes” which were also distributed to feed the most animals. Note: In days prior to hay balers, hay was cut, pitch-forked loose on to a wagon, then hoisted with a device similar to large tongs into the hay loft which during the winter was forked onto a wagon for



ground distribution. A disadvantage with this method that much hay was trampled by the livestock resulting in waste.

Both the early methods, and the methods for small bales were labor intensive for barn storage, and in feeding distribution. This required a crew of workers in the hay loft pulling the hay from a “hay elevator” and stacking it efficiently. It was very hot work. Ventilation was poor and the work was heavy. While drinking water was usually available, containers lacked the insulation of today and was often tepid at best, although very welcome.

One benefit of working in the hay fields was that lunch was provided. In Cameron that often met a trip to town. Favorite stops in Cameron were Hiatt's Grill, Helms Cafe, or Mae's Tavern. Hamburgers and french fries were in demand along with a cold beverage. For many of us, it was the only time we visited any restaurant.

In some cases, lunch was home-made by the farmer's wife, and in many cases a bigger treat. Near us was the Kinsella family. None of the children married, and all stayed on the farm. One (Ann) was the designated cook, and she was excellent. We were treated to home-made bread with home-made butter and jam, fried chicken with the works, and home-made pie. We would have been willing to work just for the meal.

If you drive in the countryside today about all you will see is “big bales” of hay. They are much larger, averaging about 1500 lbs each, and much less labor-intensive. The bales are dropped on the ground, picked up by a tractor with a “hay spike” and stacked outdoors, all of which can be done by a single person.

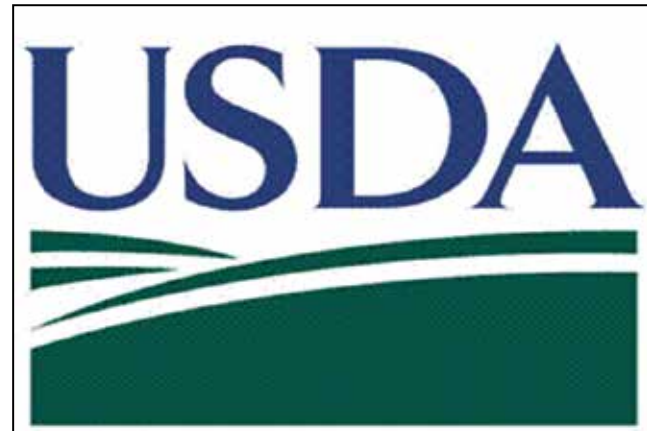
While the “big bales” suffer some weather damage on the outside, the inner part is generally in good condition for the livestock. In most cases a few big bales can be dropped in a pasture

or feedlot, and last for several days, allowing animals to feed whenever they want—which is most of the time in cold, wintery weather.

The price, or cost, of these big bales is determined by the supply available, and that is mostly determined by weather conditions. A drought in just about any area of the nation will drive up the price everywhere. Farmers with an excess amount of hay can easily sell it for shipment to other areas in need.

“Making hay” is much less labor-intensive today, but most of us have vivid memories of the “old days” when hay crews were necessary, provided lots of hard work, friendships, and memories.

For those of us who were members of the “crew”, there was great personal satisfaction, a sense of accomplishment. When I went to work for a national company based on the East Coast, the Jewish gentleman who hired me (I totally lacked experience) told me I got the job due to being a “farm boy”. He said, “farm boys know how to work.”



## USDA to provide pandemic assistance to livestock producers for animal losses

Livestock and poultry producers who suffered losses during the pandemic due to insufficient access to processing can apply for assistance for those losses and the cost of depopulation and disposal of the animals. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Vilsack announced the Pandemic Livestock Indemnity Program (PLIP) in [recorded] remarks at the National Pork Industry Conference in Wisconsin Dells, WI. The announcement is part of USDA's Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative. Livestock and poultry producers can apply for assistance through USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) July 20 through Sept. 17, 2021.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, authorized payments

to producers for losses of livestock or poultry depopulated from March 1, 2020 through December 26, 2020, due to insufficient processing access as a result of the pandemic. PLIP payments will be based on 80% of the fair market value of the livestock and poultry and for the cost of depopulation and disposal of the animal. Eligible livestock and poultry include swine, chickens and turkeys, but pork producers are expected to be the primary recipients of the assistance.

Eligible livestock must have been depopulated from March 1, 2020 through December 26, 2020, due to insufficient processing access as a result of the pandemic. Livestock must have been physically located in the U.S. or a territory of the U.S. at the time of depopulation.

## Help feed hungry Missourians through Hogs for Hunger campaign

Last year, through the Missouri Farmers Care Pork Partnership, Missouri pig farmers and partners donated 611 pigs to provide more than 318,000 servings of pork to meet the needs of food-insecure Missourians. The effort is growing this year under a new name — Hogs for Hunger. As part of the expansion, Missouri pig farmers and 4-H and FFA exhibitors statewide are invited to donate pigs to address hunger in their communities.

According to Feeding America, one in five Missouri children are food insecure and face uncertainty as to where their next meal may come from. Through Hogs for Hunger, Missouri pig farmers and 4-H and FFA swine exhibitors have an opportunity to change the lives of neighbors, friends and classmates who don't have enough to eat.

“For years, Missouri agriculture raised aware-

ness of need and gathered resources to help close the gap for our neighbors facing food insecurity,” said Ashley McCarty, executive director of Missouri Farmers Care Foundation. “Food banks consistently report that protein is the most requested and hardest item to procure. With this partnership, Missouri farmers and youth exhibitors are poised to step up and make an impact.”

Pig farmers and Missouri 4-H and FFA swine exhibitors are invited to process and donate pigs locally this summer through the Hogs for Hunger program. Swine exhibitors can also donate their pig at the Missouri State Fair where up to 50 pigs will be accepted for donation. Donors need to indicate their commitment to donate pigs ahead of time at [www.MOFarmerscare.com/drive](http://www.MOFarmerscare.com/drive).



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