

As important as it is to have hay tested to determine nutrient quality, it is equally important to know how to use that information to develop a feeding plan for your herd. Using the information from the hay test, producers are able to determine if their cows will meet their nutrient requirements by feeding hay, or if supplemental feeding should take place.

Let's consider a 1200 lb dry cow consuming 8% crude protein hay. Based on her weight and dry matter intake, she will meet her protein requirements without needing an additional source of protein. However, after this same 1200 lb cow calves, her protein requirements have increased due to lactation and the 8% CP hay alone will no longer be enough to meet her requirements. Therefore, an additional source of protein is needed. Calculations from this particular scenario reveal that this hay adequately meets the dry cow's requirements, but is not enough for a lactating cow.

This information is useful in making management decisions that save money. Applying the results from the hay sample and calculations performed will assist in knowing when and how much supplemental feeding should occur. This results in a decrease in feed costs due to unnecessary or excessive supplementation. It also provides a better awareness of areas that the cattle are deficient and what steps should be taken to correct the issue.

For more information on how to do the calculations used in the above scenario, or to have your hay samples taken for testing, call Laura at Henderson County Veterinary Hospital.