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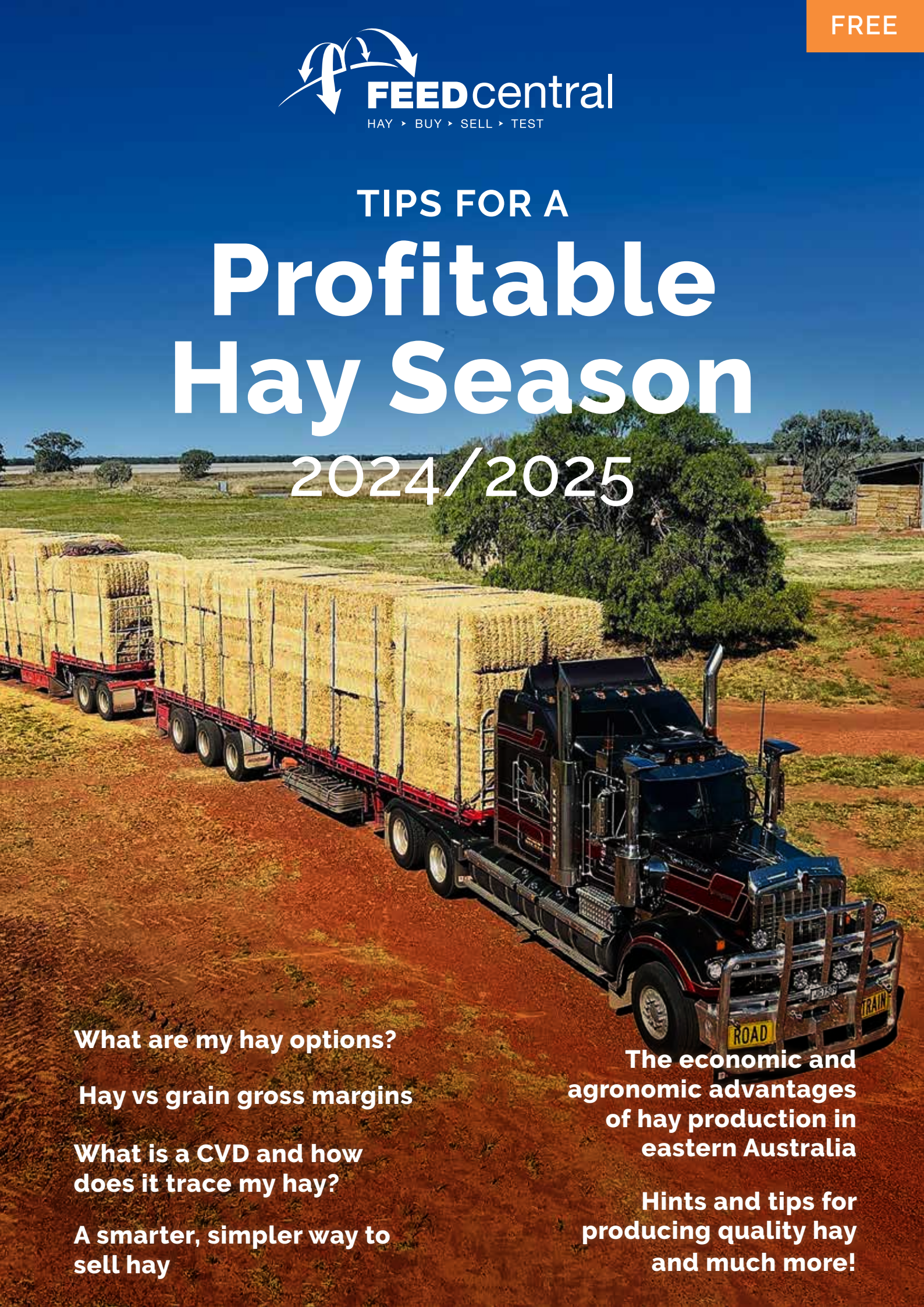
HAY › BUY › SELL › TEST

TIPS FOR A

Profitable Hay Season

2024/2025



What are my hay options?

Hay vs grain gross margins

What is a CVD and how does it trace my hay?

A smarter, simpler way to sell hay

The economic and agronomic advantages of hay production in eastern Australia

Hints and tips for producing quality hay and much more!

CONTENTS

A MESSAGE FROM

The Feed Central Team

Thank you for your interest in joining our conversation about growing hay for profit.

As we stand on the brink of a new season, the importance of embracing good hay making practices cannot be overstated. In a world where the unpredictable becomes the norm, from natural forces to market dynamics, our commitment to excellence in every step of the "seed to feed" process remains unwavering.

This year, as always, patience and strategic planning are paramount. Choosing the optimal windows of production and focusing on quality over yield are not just recommendations; they are the cornerstone of successful hay and straw production. It is essential to remember that quality is the key ingredient in any farm management plan, this also includes storage strategies. Without a proper shed storage plan, the risk of significant financial loss looms large, especially considering the potential for older, lower-grade products already on the market.

- ✓ Focus on quality over yield
- ✓ Have storage strategies
- ✓ Plan cashflow to enable flexibility in delivery
- ✓ Opportunities exist in beef and dairy
- ✓ Sound paddock preparation is key

Our booklet is designed to guide you through the complexities of planting, paddock preparation, seed types, and the meticulous organisation needed for cutting, baling and storage of hay. It encapsulates the high standards we advocate: high density bale weights, consistency in bale shape & size, visual appearance, and optimal feed test results. It's important to acknowledge that while some end users prioritize a high-performing feed test, others are drawn to the visual appeal and aroma of green hay, which stimulates animal appetite. Yet, a balance of both qualities is often sought after.

Despite an anticipated soft early demand, the importance of Forward Contracting cannot be understated, with adjustments in timing and quantities likely to be dictated by the market. Financial readiness for a potentially prolonged selling period and flexibility in delivery spreads will be crucial, which necessitates the capacity for storage. It's clear that high-quality 'FCA' grade or better products are in demand, underscoring the importance of sourcing products to promote livestock health and weight gain as a priority.

Opportunities abound in this sector, from Australia's robust beef herd rebuild phase to the solid trading conditions for dairy, resulting in the need for high-quality hay, supported by the infrastructure of storage sheds and financial planning for a year-round market. The booklet also highlights strategies to minimize risks, such as grain frost and the inevitable challenges that come with unfavourable curing and baling conditions.

However, it is also prudent to be aware of the potential threats that could impact our efforts, including unfavourable weather conditions, storage challenges, pest and disease, machinery breakdowns, and international impacts on fertiliser availability and pricing.

As we navigate these challenges and opportunities together, our shared goal remains to support and enhance the sustainability and profitability of your farming operations. Let us move forward with confidence, armed with the knowledge and insights shared in our booklet, to make this winter planting season a resounding success.

Thank you for your continued trust in us as your partner in quality hay and straw production. Here's to a season of abundant growth, resilience, and success!

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A brief snapshot of our company

Feed Central is a family company, founded by Tim and Megan Ford in 2002 with the support of Tim's parents Kevin and Marie Ford *(as volunteers!!!)*.

Since then, four children have come along, Hugh, Annabelle, Molly and Ted, who are involved in the business around their various school and university commitments. In addition to the Ford Family, the business now employees 15 people directly and another 15 in contractor roles.

Feed Central began in order to help clients procure a regular supply of consistent quality hay. Today that's still our core business, with our Vision and Mission as follows:

> **OUR VISION** is for the domestic fodder industry to satisfy the demands of end users 100% of the time.
>
> **OUR MISSION** is to offer the industry the commercial tools to allow this to happen. To this effect, we will lead by example, we will set a cracking pace and we will relish the opportunity to raise the bar over and over again.

These days, Feed Central quality assures several hundred thousand tonnes of hay through our Feed Test and Visual Grading system and is directly involved in the marketing of around 100,000 tonnes per annum.

We use a combination of modern e-commerce marketing via our simple web trading platform www.feedcentral.com.au and good old fashioned phone and on-farm service.

We are incredibly proud of our 20 year impeccable payment record to growers. Feed Central strives to always be commercially competitive and profitable. Like all family businesses, the vast majority of our profits are redirected back into the business and reinvested into the industry.

Tim & Megan Ford
receiving a Finalists Award for Feed Central at the 2021 Focus HR Business Excellence Awards.

Supply & demand forecast for the 2024/25 season

David Clothier
NATIONAL SALES MANAGER

The level of demand in the coming seasons with the present challenges is very much an unknown. There is a large enough volume of quality 2023 season shedded stock heading into the 2024/25 season. The majority of outside stacked hay has been compromised by a wetter than predicted summer.

New season quality hay will be preferred even at a higher price.

As we entered the early part of 2024, the hay market has experienced a notable downward trend in demand due to above average widespread rain across the majority of the Eastern seaboard over December and January. We would typically expect demand to increase as we approach weaning and then an additional increase as pastures are challenged by frost in the Autumn months. With the majority of hay made through spring over a 90-day period, it is worth remembering that livestock eat 365 days a year and quality shedded hay will always be in demand.

As we head further into 2024, the hay market shows promise with increased demand, opportunities for high quality products, and innovative sales strategies. The current favourable pasture conditions are resulting in stronger cattle prices from graziers wanting to capitalize on this opportunity whilst feedlotters have reduced intake numbers waiting for the market to stabilize. The continued expansion within the feedlot industry augers well for future demand of hay and straw. Feed Central is optimistic that the hay market is poised for growth and continued success in the coming months.

Our view will remain that if producers do not have appropriate shed space for storage or a firm immediate off-the-paddock market, hay and straw should not be considered an option.

Once you've made your hay, we suggest you do the following:

1. Get your hay quality assured.

Why? It shows the buyers you are committed to producing a quality product. Buyers are becoming ever more particular. Quality in, better returns out. Buyers are looking at the price, (Metabolizable Energy) M.E score, (Crude Protein) C.P score and Visual Inspection score. Without this detail you will struggle to accurately describe your product and justify your asking price.

2. Once quality assured talk to a hay market expert.

Why? Because once you know all the facts you can accurately benchmark the price of your product with a hay market expert.

We have a team of experienced hay experts who are happy to talk with producers at any time. Free call: 1300 669 429.

3. Keep your price & bale numbers up to date.

No matter where you advertise, keep all the information relevant. Don't let an old price or wrong bale number be advertised; it could see you missing out on a deal.

Feed Central continues to invest in its operations, particularly in sales and the online platform. The company has witnessed robust growth over the last couple of years through both new and existing buyers on its user-friendly web platform, indicating a rising demand for hay and straw.

By maintaining regular communication with buyers, Feed Central ensures their needs are met efficiently and effectively. The expansion of the sales team has further widened the company's reach, fostering solid relationships with many growers and buyers.

By David Clothier, National Sales Manager

Buyers are increasingly interested in knowing the quality of hay before they buy it...

Will there be a demand for my hay?

The short answer is – YES.

You've heard us say it before, livestock eat 365 days a year. Our country needs hay to be made but take into account that with hay marketing you are running the marathon not the sprint. It takes time to sell hay.

Please note that we are not expecting there to be a big market for hay off the paddock or stored in the paddock. This is typical to most years (drought excluded). As usual, this year the market for 2024-2025 hay will unfold progressively throughout the year.

There is typically always a market for hay that meets the below requirements:

- **High Density Bales**
  - » We're talking 600+ kgs per bale. Australia is a vast country with an increasingly variable climate. Hay is being moved over large distances and using a high density baler helps to minimise the freight cost and increase the potential options and regions of marketing your hay.
- **Shed Storage**
  - » Increasingly important. Good sheds are key to preserving the quality of the product.
- **Quality Assured Product**
  - » Buyers are interested in knowing the quality of your hay before they buy it. They want to know the visual grade and Feed Test values and to see good quality photos! Having those 3 things done greatly assists in the marketing and moving of hay, all the while helping to maximise returns.
- **High Quality Hay**
  - » We use all the tools in the toolbox to make quality hay (see page 18).

What do hay buyers really want?

In summary, here's what Feed Central hay buyers want:

- **Heavy, large, square bales (8x4x3)** that maximise freight and handling efficiencies at every stage. High Density (HD) balers that can deliver this size bale are now highly preferred.
- **Feed with high energy & good protein,** so baling while the crop is immature is vital. The higher the energy (M.E.) the better. The best way to increase energy is to cut early.
- **Oats, barley, wheat, vetch and lucerne hay** that is green in colour with no (or minimal) weather damage.
- **Access to fodder 365 days of the year.**
- **Shedded product,** with all-weather access.

In the Feed Central system, buyers are quoted delivered prices to their property within seconds. Obviously, the heavier bales are, the lower freight cost per tonne will be. Growers with heavy bale weights will often get a higher ex-farm price as the freight component is cheaper, so even though the supplier's ex-farm price is higher, the buyer's price is lower, so EVERYONE'S A WINNER.

High-density, large, square bales, such as those made by the Krone 8 String Balers and the 8x4x3, are very popular because you achieve an excellent load on a Drop-Deck or B-Double trailer and most front-end loaders can handle the weight.

Heavy bales will achieve pay weights in general, so focusing on achieving heavy weights regardless of the bale configuration will always be of benefit to your operation.

Alternative Bale Sizes unpacked.

If you must make round bales, consider 4x4 bales which have freight advantages over 5x4 rounds. Small, square bales are a viable alternative for niche markets.

High-density, large, square bales are normally cheaper to make when calculated on a per tonne basis. It is also quicker and easier to move a large volume of large squares both on farm and on trucks.

Do not underestimate the importance of this. Bale weights and sizes are the area where smart growers maximise their returns and create huge efficiencies in their operation. In very simple terms, imagine all the extra work and man hours required to move 500kg bales off your paddock versus 750kg bales. Think of the cost. Now, multiply this tenfold as you think about loading, transport, unloading etc.

Maximum efficiencies are gained in high density 8x4x3 bales.

Benefits of making hay for those who aren't sure

Every year around 10 million tonnes of fodder (hay, straw and silage) is produced. Total value is around $2 billion. Approximately half is traded and half retained for farm use. Like all commodities, the market is cyclical, however, growers who are prepared to store the product in a shed, and market progressively through the year can achieve great returns.

Grain vs Hay

Almost every year, hay out-performs grain in gross value per hectare. Yes, the work is there but so are the rewards. The rule of thumb is that hay yields approximately twice that of grain, in a good season. This rule is very relevant when crops have bulk vegetation but lack soil moisture to make grain, especially after frost.

Over the last 10-20 years, hay production has become an important tool in the control of rye grass, especially in southern areas.

To highlight the potential of growing hay using this rule, Feed Central has inserted a simple gross margin budget which provides space for growers to do their own figures. The calculation compares gross margin per hectare from harvesting grain to making hay. This can be found on pages 8 and 9.

Additionally, fodder crops allow grazing to occur earlier than with a grain crop and in some regions facilitate double cropping.

Demand typically crashes in spring, during the baling period (at the height of supply). Top producers run a marathon, not a sprint with the sale process. Livestock eat 365 days /year. As producers it's important to know you don't have to sell out in spring at harvest..

The economic and agronomic advantages of hay production in eastern australia

Stephen Page
GROWER SERVICES MANAGER

Introduction

In the dynamic and challenging world of agriculture, Eastern Australian farmers face a decision each season: whether to grow hay or grain crops. This choice is not merely a matter of tradition or preference; it's a strategic decision that significantly impacts farm profitability, sustainability, and risk management.

With an annual production of approximately 10 million tonnes valued at around $2 billion, fodder crops—comprising hay, straw, and silage—represent a vital segment of the agricultural sector. Over the years I have seen professional farmers insert hay production into their cropping rotations or having the flexibility within their operation to flip from grain to hay at short notice during the season. This article investigates the economic and agronomic benefits of selecting hay over grain, supported by industry data and expert insights.

Economic Viability

The economic argument for choosing hay production over grain is compelling. Historically, hay consistently outperforms grain in terms of gross value per hectare. This is particularly notable in seasons where crops exhibit robust vegetation but face limitations due to insufficient soil moisture for grain production. Often this is compounded by frost conditions. In such scenarios, hay production not only offers a viable alternative but can significantly enhance risk mitigation strategies for farmers.

The ability to switch between grain and hay production, based on prevailing conditions, enables farmers to spread their risk and optimize their agricultural outputs more effectively.

Storage and Market Timing

Hay requires strategic marketing, sheds, and finance. Even though livestock eat 365 days of the year, hay does not have a market every day; buyers will buy as their need arise. In times of excessive pasture growth, trade can slow to a trickle then boom in the dry periods. This said, Feed Central works hard to develop markets and long term forward contracts. Producers need to be able to store their hay in sheds, complete visual assessment and feed test, then sell progressively throughout the year. It is crucial to have sufficient cashflow to achieve superior returns and capitalize on the cyclical nature of the market.

Agronomic Benefits

Beyond the economic advantages, hay production offers several agronomic benefits that contribute to its appeal.

» **Species Selection**
Hay production gives a diverse choice between cereal crops, legume crops, mixed species, and opportunities for perennial pastures. Species selection does directly affect soil health, biodiversity, and base line soil nutrients.

» **Weed and Pest Management**
Hay production has emerged as an effective tool in managing rye grass and other weeds, particularly in the southern regions of Eastern Australia. This benefit aligns with broader integrated pest management strategies, reducing reliance on chemical controls and mitigating the risk of herbicide resistance.

» **Soil Health and Fertility**
The cultivation of fodder crops can positively impact soil health by enhancing organic matter, nitrogen fixation, companion cropping and reducing erosion risk. These crops often require less intensive chemicals, contributing to the maintenance of soil fertility and structure, and assisting with chemical resistant weeds.

Flexibility in Crop Management

Fodder crops offer flexibility in terms of grazing management, allowing in some instances for early in-crop grazing or grazing after hay production. The early production can also be beneficial in regions conducive to double cropping, maximizing land use efficiency and profitability.

Operational Considerations

Choosing between hay and grain production also involves considerations related to machinery, labour, and storage infrastructure. Hay production can distribute labour demands more evenly across the year, reducing the pressure during peak periods.

Infrastructure investments in the form of quality sheds with good all-weather access will limit damage to hay, optimising prices at critical times and entice buyers to your hay.

The use of high-density balers will maximise the quantity of hay stacked safely in your shed and on the truck, reducing freight rates and the cost of delivery.

Other considerations to hay production are timing of the cutting of the crop. Cutting early in maturity will assist in getting better feed test results. The reduction of grain within the bales will result in less rodent issues during storage.

Conclusion

In summary, the choice to produce hay instead of grain is supported by economic and agronomic benefits. The potential for higher gross margins, coupled with benefits such as risk diversification, weed management, and soil health improvement, positions hay as a strategic opportunity for farmers.

However, success in hay production requires careful planning, considerations around storage, marketing, and operational capacity. As the agricultural landscape evolves, the flexibility and resilience offered by hay production will continue to be a valuable consideration.

By Stephen Page, Grower Services Manager

Some quick calculations can help you compare the potential profitability of crop options.

Estimating hay yields – made easy with our comparison chart!

We have inserted a simple gross margin budget which provides space for growers to do their own figures. The calculation compares gross margin per hectare from harvesting grain to making hay. Please go to the table on the next page to see your budget chart. We trust this will be helpful to you.

In estimating hay yields, some experienced farmers and contractors simply multiply the grain yield by 2 (i.e. hay yield can be expected to be double that of grain). Previous experience with crop simulation tools and basic water use efficiency tables can help estimate the likely future grain yield.

Please note: grain yields in drought conditions can be very hard to estimate, we strongly recommend working with a local agronomist for best results.

CALCULATE

Other methods (potentially more accurate) to estimate hay yields are outlined on right.

Once you have your yield you can then move onto the Gross margin sheet attached to look at potential returns per hectare.

COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH HAY PRODUCTION

Hay harvesting contract costs will vary depending on the area on offer and proximity of the contractor to your paddocks. We expect to see production prices rise in the coming season and advise checking with your contractor before starting. Prices may or may not include fuel. Best to ask.

You can expect something close to the below for the 23/24 season:

- $60 - 70/Ha for cutting with mower conditioner
- $15 - $20/Ha for raking (depending on the number of times raked)
- $25/bale for an 8x4x3; add another $5/bale with steamer
- Add a handling and stacking cost. This amount will depend on paddock size and location of stacks or distances to shed.

ESTIMATING HAY YIELD: METHOD 1

1. Cut 1m² of crop at the height you will cut at (NOT ground level, look closer to 20cm to produce quality hay)
2. Get kg/m² fresh weight using scales
3. Multiply by 10 to calculate t/Ha fresh weight
4. Repeat at 4 or 5 paddock locations to determine average
5. Assume 20% - 30% of fresh weight makes it into a dry bale - multiply by 0.2 or 0.3 to calculate hay yield t/Ha

ESTIMATING HAY YIELD: METHOD 2

1. Cut 1 m² of crop at the height you will cut at (NOT ground level, look closer to 20cm to produce quality hay)
2. Dry in 50˚C oven and weigh after a minimum of 24 hours to calculate kg/ m² dry weight at approx. 12% moisture
3. Multiply by 10 to calculate t/Ha dry matter
4. Assume 80% - 90% ** of the dry weight makes it into a bale - multiply by 0.8 or 0.9 to calculate hay yield t/Ha
5. Repeat at 4 or 5 paddock locations (EXAMPLE: Five 1m² cuts on a barley paddock, average weight 1.09 kg/m² fresh weight 1.09 x 10 = 10.9 t/Ha of fresh material 10.9 x 25% = 2.7 t/Ha estimated hay yield *

* The % conversion increases with crop maturity. For crops that have flowered and are into grain fill, assume closer to 30% as the final hay yield estimate. Less mature/fresher crops use 20% - 25% as final yield estimate.

** Final hay yield will depend on losses after cutting due to weather, raking or baler set-up.

HAY MAKING GROSS MARGIN			Example	Your Estimate
Step 1 - Estimate Gross Return Per Ha				
Estimate Yield *(use tools from this sheet)*		A	4.5	_____tonnes/Ha
Estimate your Sell Price (FARM GATE BASIS)		B	250	$_____tonnes
Total Gross Return Per Ha (A x B)		C	1125	$_____Ha
Step 2 - Determine Your Pre-Baling Expenses (normally quoted per Ha) *TIP: The higher the yield, the cheaper the per tonne cost*				
	Contract Mowing	D	60	_____/Ha
	Contract Raking	E	15	_____/Ha
	Other	F		_____/Ha
	Sub-Total Step 1 (D+E+F)	G	75	_____/Ha
Step 3 - Determine Your Baling and Post-Baling Expenses (normally done per bale) *TIP: The heavier the bale- the cheaper the per tonne cost*				
	Baling	H	25	$_____/bale
	Handling	I	5	$_____/bale
	Other	J		$_____/bale
	Sub-Total 2 (H+I+J)	K	30	$_____/bale
Step 4 - Determine Bales per Ha and Cost per Ha *TIP: When paying contractor per bale, watch bale weights carefully*				
Estimate Bale Weights		L	625	_____kg
	Bales Per Ha = Yield (A) divided by Bale Weight (L) x 1000	M	7.2	_____bales/Ha
	Cost Per Ha = (M) x Cost Per Bale (K)	N	216	$_____/Ha
Step 5 - Calculate Gross Margin				
	Calculate Total Cost Per Ha (G+N)	O	291	$_____/Ha
	Calculate Gross Margin (C-O)	P	834	$_____/Ha

GRAIN GROSS MARGIN			Example	Your Estimate
Step 1 - Estimate Gross Return Per Ha				
Estimate Yield		Q	2.25	_____tonnes/Ha
Estimate Your Sell Price (FARM GATE BASIS)		R	360	$_____tonnes
Total Gross Return Per Ha (AxB)		S	810	$_____Ha
Step 2 - Determine Your Harvest Expenses (normally quoted per Ha) *TIP: The higher the yield the cheaper the per tonne cost*				
	Header Contractor	T	60	_____/Ha
	Other	U	15	_____/Ha
	Sub-Total Step 2 (T+U)	V	75	_____/Ha
Step 3 - Calculate Gross Margin				
	Calculate Gross Margin (S-W)	W	735	$_____/Ha
Which Return is Best - Hay (P) or Grain (W)?			$99	HAY GIVES A HIGHER RETURN PER HA.

* The % conversion increases with crop maturity. For crops that have flowered and are into grain fill, assume closer to 30% as the final Hay yield estimate. Less mature/fresher crops use 20% - 25% as final yield estimate.

** Final Hay yield will depend on losses after cutting due to weather, raking or baler set-up.

Hay vs Grain

In many years, hay can out-perform grain in gross value per hectare. This is particularly relevant in dry years with frost.

Calculate what is best for you*. Complete the tables *(left)* for producing hay and then repeat for producing grain and compare your margins. (Please note, we strongly recommend working with a local agronomist for best results).

What are my hay options?

Oaten Hay

This type of hay has been available for many years and while it has not been producing feed test results comparable to wheat or barley, it has potential to out-yield both. It is an excellent product and can be expected to be in strong demand. Oats is a highly resilient and competitive cereal in different environments.

In comparison to other cereals, there are fewer weed control options, and it is more prone to lodging than other cereals and less tolerant of alkaline soils.

Another advantage of oaten hay is that it has better resistance to leaf rust than wheat or barley and can also be used for grazing during winter months prior to fencing off in preparation for cutting hay. It can be sown as a monoculture or blended with other species such as ryegrass and clovers to increase yield and quality. Oaten hay prices have been supported in 2023 by a strong export market.

Barley Hay

Barley hay has been proven to feed test very well. It is less susceptible to stripe rust than wheat, but net blotch can be an issue in wet years. It is an exceptional product and can be expected to be in strong demand.

Barley is generally less tolerant of acidic or waterlogged soil and more suited to a short season early maturity option. Beardless varieties should be considered to widen your market options.

Wheaten Hay

Wheat varieties tend to need to be sown very early in order to achieve maximum dry matter, especially if it is to be grazed. Wheat varieties have a wide sowing window from early March to around June. Wheat has a reasonable range of weed control options and is reasonably hardy and tolerant.

It is however more susceptible to leaf diseases such as stripe rust. Wheaten hay provides outstanding feed test results in drought years, especially when frosted. It has subsequently established a strong position in dairy and feedlot rations. Growers can expect demand for frosted wheaten hay to be strong. Beardless varieties should be considered to widen your market options.

Triticale Hay

Triticale is a hardy cereal which can tolerate a wide range of soil and seasonal conditions, including a greater tolerance for more water-logging than other cereals, although it is more susceptible to frost damage. Most varieties are mid to late maturity and can be sown over a wide sowing window. However, in our experience Triticale has a lower feed test and can be difficult to sell as hay at times.

Mixed Species

Adding legumes (peas and vetches) to cereal crops can improve the nutritive value slightly, usually at the expense of total yield. However this may complicate weed and disease

control, grazing and timing, as well as method of fodder conservation. Cereal/legume mixes must be matched for their respective maturity dates with the purpose for which they are grown kept in mind. That is, when the decision is made to harvest the crop mix at either the flag leaf - boot stage or the late milk - soft dough stage, the maturity of the particular legume chosen must closely match that of the cereal choice.

Pasture Hay

Forage ryegrass provides the basis for high quality forage sown on an annual basis. Forage ryegrass tolerates wet conditions better than oats and will produce 40 to 60% higher winter growth than perennial ryegrass but requires high rainfall or irrigation to reach full potential. It can be sown from Mid-March to June.

Persian, Balansa, Berseem and Arrowleaf clover are annual legumes which provide high quality legume forage. White clover is currently considered the best legume to improve pasture feed quality for dryland pastures. Any pasture hay with strong lucerne, rye or clover content that feed tests well should be in good demand, with pricing subject to the feed test results.

Vetch Hay

Vetch hay makes a high quality, high protein (16-20% protein) and highly palatable hay. Slashers or rotary type mowers are preferred for hay making operations. Conventional cutter-bar type mowers are not suitable as they are prone to blockages from the vining growth. The popularity of vetch continues to grow and it is often in high demand.

Lucerne Hay

Lucerne is a versatile forage crop cultivated for its high nutritional value and adaptability. It stands out for its protein-rich content and essential vitamins. When compared to vetch or other legumes, Lucerne hay frequently boasts a superior protein profile and better fiber digestibility.

Its deep root system enhances soil structure and nutrient absorption, contributing to overall farm sustainability. Lucerne's ability to fix nitrogen reduces the need for synthetic fertilizers, resulting in cost savings for farmers.

Its resilience to drought and pest resistance further solidify Lucerne hay as a cost-effective and valuable component in livestock production. Feed Central actively trades both dryland and irrigated lucerne.

Canola Hay

Normally, canola hay is only cut as opportunity arises in drought or frost years. It is not traditionally a hay crop.

Canola feed tests very well and it has a different taste and smell from other hay crops. There is a slightly higher chance of high nitrates in canola than in other hay. Buyers either love it or hate it, with the best sales in drought years.

Growers and contractors are achieving better quality by cutting at full flower with a windrower and then conditioning it. Try to rake as little as possible to retain quality leaf. Canola is not recommended for planting for a HYA crop.

Upper Murray Seeds®
Sow much better

Breeding premium pasture seed for Australian farmers for over 30 years

Established in 1993 by Stewart and Kate Sutherland, Upper Murray Seeds is an independent family-owned proprietary seed company leading the way in breeding, producing, and distributing pasture seed to farmers across the nation.

For close to three decades, the UMS team of experienced researchers have been focused on breeding premium pasture seed for Australian farmers. Originally in the Upper Murray region of NSW the program was relocated to the Cressy Research Station in the Tasmanian Midlands, and this is now home to their premier R&D program. It is here their team of highly skilled researchers work to breed and develop new varieties of pasture seed under authentic farming conditions.

The Silver Lucerne range is made up of four varieties covering winter activity levels, 5,7,9 and 11. These highly productive, palatable, and persistent lucernes have been purpose bred to resist common diseases and bests by Australian researcher, Dr Ian Kaehne. Dr Kaehne, a former principal research scientist at the South Australian Research and Development Institute, has been endlessly fascinated by the quest for improving plant genetics since establishing SARDI's lucerne breeding program in 1969. His objective in breeding the Silver lucerne range was to create truly multi-purpose plants across a wide range of winter activity groups.

SilverLand GT 5 is an extremely persistent, semi winter-active variety that withstands significant grazing pressure and produces exceptional quality hay/silage. Suitable to inland regions of Australia, SilverLand grows well on a wide range of well-drained soils both under irrigation and in dryland environments.

Silverosa GT 7 is the benchmark for multi-purpose, grazing tolerant lucerne. This winter-active variety has inbuilt disease and pest resistance, produces premium quality forage and is salt tolerant. The most versatile of the lucernes, it provides good growth into late autumn and holds its quality slightly longer than the highly winter-active Silver varieties.

Continued next page...

Silverado 9 Is a premium quality lucerne, with built-in broad-spectrum disease and pest resistance that enhance its forage quality and performance. This highly winter-active variety is ideal for mixed grazing and hay production enterprises. It suits late autumn/early winter sowing, and it tolerates frost and cold winters. This variety is suited to year-round hay production systems, pasture mixes and cropping rotations.

SilverSky 11 is the latest lucerne variety that sets the bar very high in terms of dry matter production. It's a vigorous plant that performs extremely well in both winter and summer. As an extremely winter-active variety, SilverSky suits a wide range of forage systems but is particularly well suited to hay production in irrigation areas. It is both highly persistent and productive - not usually a feature of extreme winter activity.

For more information on Upper Murray Seeds' Silver Lucerne range, visit www.uppermurrayseeds.com.au and download our *'Silver Lucerne Guide'*, or get in touch with your local area manager.

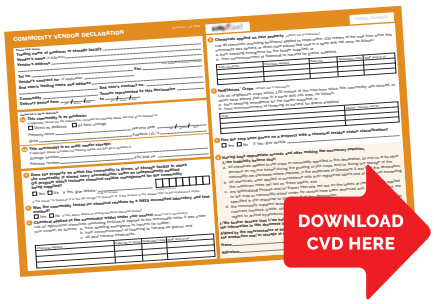
What is a CVD (Commodity Vendor Declaration) and how does it trace my hay?

When deciding to graze a crop, or cut for hay or straw, chemical withholding periods need to be considered and strictly adhered to. **Remember that ALL chemicals applied to the crop at any stage of production must be documented on the CVD.**

Chemical residue testing of feed commodities and animal carcasses has continued to increase throughout the majority of food sectors. For many feeding and food operations, this type of testing forms part of industry audits and compliance.

CVD's are a major part of this audit and compliance chain. Keeping accurate records of chemical application rates and dates is a must. A Commodity Vendor Declaration containing these details will need to be completed if the crop is cut and sold as hay.

No product will be marketed or sold through the Feed Central system without a current and correctly completed CVD.



Fungicide treatments and export slaughter intervals

The following 'actives' can be found in certain name/branded fungicide treatments: Azoxystrobin, Epoxiconazole & Bixafen.

These actives interfere with 'Export Slaughter Interval' (ESI) requirements. Grazing withholding periods for such actives are only applicable for the domestic market. The majority of export markets have more stringent standards which require withholding periods and ESI's to be adhered to. Labelling and the advice provided on any fungicide must be double checked carefully. ESI's are unlikely to be found under the 'Withholding Periods' section. If applicable, the advice may be found under the 'Trade Advice' section of the label / full product detail.

Disclaimer: *Feed Central reserves the right not to trade product treated with the aforementioned actives.*

Use of inoculants and preservatives in baling hay

In recent years, it has been quite difficult for many producers to produce quality, dry hay. This often results in growers considering using inoculants and hay preservatives. These additives do have their place within the hay production system, but it's important to understand the proper time to consider the use of such products.

Changes in technology, improvements in machinery such as the availability of conditioners etc, have given hay producers and contractors more flexibility. Consider the value of the hay crop and weigh it against the cost of setting up the applicator and using additives.

Another consideration is the market. Ensure that the end user will accept hay that has been treated. Some chaff mills, export markets and domestic uses will not purchase hay treated with additives.

Times when additives may be appropriate

A situation where an additive may be suitable could be the advent of inclement weather during the curing period, potentially making it extremely difficult to make quality hay using standard hay making methods. Also in drought conditions, during the crop growing season may result in crop failures, and the only choice may be to make hay. These "failed crops" are extremely hard to dry down due to seed heads in the boot.

Advantages of use

The advantages of using inoculants and preservatives include the opportunity to reduce or stop mould growth, a shorter time in windrows, lengthened baling hours, improved hay quality and palatability, and to maintain the hay's green colour.

Protein hays such as lucerne and vetch baled at slightly higher moistures, enable the production of a higher quality hay due to less need for turning, softer texture, a greener colour and better leaf attachment which is desired by hay consumers.

Keep in mind that ideal storage moisture ranges for hay depends upon bale size. Large square bales should be stored at 12-16% moisture, and small bales can be about 3% higher in moistures. When moisture is higher than these ranges, a hay preservative or inoculant may be an appropriate consideration; however according to many sources, if moisture reaches more than 25%, additives and preservatives are not recommended.

What is the difference between the additives?

- **Bacterial inoculants** are essentially designed to add more 'good' bacteria that aid in fast fermentation and to help reduce dry matter losses in hay by improving aerobic stability (ie: stopping mould growth). Most hay already contains such bacteria, as it is naturally sourced from many forage plants and inoculants simply add an additional amount. Make sure to use **hay** inoculants, not **silage** inoculants as these rarely work on hay. Inoculants often protect against small errors and allow you to bale hay that is 3 to 5% higher in moisture than would normally store safely. But no higher! In University controlled studies all inoculants tested failed frequently when moisture of hay was over 25%.
- **Organic acids** are the most common form of hay preservatives with propionic acid being the most prevalent. Preservatives containing high amounts of propionic acid are generally accepted as effective in

reducing spontaneous heating in moist hay; however, the use of ammonium propionate (buffered propionic acid) is often recommended over propionic acid because it is less caustic. More than one buffered acid may be included in product mixes such as propionic + acetic acids. The propionic acid is highly effective against mould growth whilst acetic acid is more effective against bacteria and yeast. Unlike inoculants, preservatives do not increase hay quality but help maintain quality and reduce spoilage. Rates of acid required will vary based upon the moisture content of the hay and should be sprayed using the most uniform application as possible. Many studies to this point have shown no consistent response to preservatives used on hay over 30% moisture.

Applications are generally applied using an aftermarket spray system mounted near the baler pick-up. Effective application of hay preservatives relies heavily upon using the proper rate (dependent on moisture content and size of bale) and quality of forage.

Testing moisture levels in windrows

Windrows have uneven moisture and our estimates of moisture aren't always perfect. The recommended and easy way to measure moisture percentage and dry matter, is the **Microwave Oven Test.** The recommended procedure for this test is as follows:

- ✓ **Obtain a representative sample** from the crop – a number of points throughout the paddock, remembering that if testing hay, it is often wetter underneath.
- ✓ **Chop the sample into 5-10mm lengths and mix thoroughly.**
- ✓ **Weigh a representative sub-sample** (Ideally 100g), record the weight, and place in a thin layer on a "microwave-safe" container.
- ✓ **Place a container of water and the sample into the microwave** and dry for 2 minutes. (Failure to use the glass of water with the sample may result in fire. Ensure that weight of water does not exceed weight of sample to be dried)
- ✓ **Remove sample and weigh.**
- ✓ **Stir and place back in the microwave.**
- ✓ **Repeat drying in 30 second lots** until the moisture loss is less than 3 grams, the weight doesn't change, or the sample appears to be starting to burn.
- ✓ **If burning occurs,** use the last recorded weight.
- ✓ **Calculate the moisture % = (wet weight of sample - dry weight of sample) divided by wet weight, multiplied by 100. Dry matter content % = 100% - moisture content**

CAUTION: Please note, microwave power may vary, therefore drying times may also vary.

EXAMPLE 1

- Hay initial wet (damp) sample = 150g
- After drying, final dry sample = 114g
- Dry matter % = (114g / 150g) x 100 = 76%
- Moisture % = 100% – 76% = 24 %

✓ **Sample indicates hay ideal for applying Si-Lac Extra**

FEEDcentral
HAY ▸ BUY ▸ SELL ▸ TEST

NATIONAL HAY QUALITY AWARDS 2024

The annual Hay Quality Awards allow Feed Central to reward producers who make high quality hay. It also provides an opportunity for growers and contractors to benchmark the quality of their hay.

Entry is FREE - Every line of hay that is inspected and sampled on-farm by a certified Feed Central inspector will be automatically entered into the Competition.

The Quality Assurance System

All hay entered into the competition will go through Feed Central's Quality Certification System (On-Farm Certified Inspector Service). This includes a Feed Central accredited Inspector inspecting the hay on-farm, completion of a comprehensive visual assessment, sampling for Feed Analysis and Feed Testing (powered by Dairy One). We expect that the lot size will be of commercial quantity and in large square bales.

Winners are announced at the annual AFIA Conference.

Award Categories

State and National awards will be presented on Best Visual Appearance and Best Feed Test Analysis for Lucerne, Cereal and Vetch Hay along with National Awards for Heaviest Hay Bale. Awards will also be presented to the Contractors where appropriate.

Hints & tips for producing quality hay in the 2025 season

The following information uses Oaten Hay as an example variety. Please note however that these hints and tips can be applied across a variety of hay types.

The Old 5 P's ...

"Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance"

Paddock Preparation

- ✓ **Removal of residual stubble from previous crop,**
- ✓ **Clean up paddocks of any foreign material**
  that may be picked up at raking or by baler.
- ✓ **Seed bed preparation**
  for better germination and reduction of soil partials in bales.

Seed Bed Preparation

- ✓ **Minimises potential for contamination**
  Always prepare your paddock prior to planting. Make sure that there are no contaminants such as wire, star posts, rocks or dead animals in the paddock that may get baled with the hay.
- ✓ **Rolling after seeding**
  - This enables mowing at a different angle to planting.
  - Minimises clods in bales.
  - Pushes residual stubble down.
- ✓ **Stubble**
  If left, it requires an elevated cutting height to avoid old crop stubble from contaminating the product – affects feed test results.
- ✓ **Weed control considerations**
  Aim for zero weeds.

Sowing Date & Rate

- ✓ **Early planting**
  Time your planting backwards from your historical ideal harvest period.
- ✓ **Match variety to soil types, rainfall zones and sowing dates**
  Get to know your local agronomist and partner with them for quality timely advice.
- ✓ **Sowing rates impact on Hay quality through:**
  1. Stem thickness - the heavier the sowing rate the thinner the stem.
  2. Weed competition
  3. Colour
  4. Thin stems have better feed test (lower NDF, ADF, high protein + ME) and are visually more attractive and palatable.

Row Spacing

- ✓ **Tighter spacing**
  Reduction in weed competition.
- ✓ **Better feed test**
  As a result of reduced stem thickness.
- ✓ **Better support base for windrow**
  It will also allow for more airflow during curing.
- ✓ **Reduces soil contamination**
  It also reduces uneven curing.

Fertiliser Considerations

- ✓ **Best to review cropping and soil history prior to planting**
  We recommend getting a soil test done
- ✓ **Fertiliser budgets prior to planting**
- ✓ **Production costs**
  Including aerial application, fertiliser cost

Weed Control

Weeds reduce the aesthetic appeal and palatability of the hay and/or may put livestock at risk of toxicity. Weeds can also make it difficult to get an even moisture reading through the windrow and into the bales.

In short, weeds are undesirable to have in hay. They pose a biosecurity risk and can cause the spread of noxious weeds. Ideally, try to control weeds prior to sowing and during the growing period. If you know that a certain part of your paddock has weeds in the crop, then consider stacking these bales separately after baling.

Disease & Insect Management

- ✓ **Depending on cropping rotation and season, your crop may require a fungicide application.**
  Fungal diseases will have quality issues related to:
  - » Colour
  - » Dust
  - » Leaf retention
- ✓ **Insect management:**
  - » Aphids increase the potential for barley yellow dwarf virus, depending on variety selection
  - » Talk with your local agronomist, for further tailored advice.

Cutting

✓ **As a general rule, the crop should be cut at soft drink can or stubby height in a dry harvest season.**

In a wet season, we suggest you cut at 20-30cms (water bottle height). This allows for a breeze to pass through and under the windrow, assisting in curing.

Most importantly, this also ensures that the windrow is up off the ground following rain, preventing significant damage and downgrading.

Cutting on a slight angle across the air-seeder rows is another method to keep windrows off the ground.

NB: Cutting high also improves your feed test and leaves a stubble to protect your soil or for grazing.crop has gone to milky or dough stage will attract mice during storage.

Windrow & Raking

Spraying crop with an application of roundup 24-36 hours prior to cutting. This kills the crop, preventing regrowth. In a warm wet windrow crops can regrow very quickly, and this green leafy material then find its way into the bale.

✓ **The ideal time to cut your hay**

The ideal time is between flowering when you can see the white anthers appear, up to the watery ripe stage when you can squeeze the grain and watery green liquid appears.

Cutting your hay after this stage risks a decline in quality due to the fact that as the plant continues to grow it will increase in fibre content and decrease in sugar content.

Cutting when the crop has gone to milky dough stage will attract mice during storage.

For Canola in particular, rake as early as possible and only once to retain as much leaf as possible in the bale.

» Make a large windrow, up to 600-1000 mm. We suggest avoiding Tedder Rakes. Many experienced hay growers will merge windrows together. What we are doing here is minimizing the percentage of material exposed to weather damage.

» Minimise raking. The less you turn hay, the more leaf you will retain, with higher quality and colour.

Curing - when is it ready to go?

✓ **Bale when the hay is dry, no matter what, never before. Regardless of the product you are baling, the single most important procedure is baling the product at the correct moisture level.**

Feed Central's Delmhorst Moisture Meter has a windrow attachment for testing hay in the windrow. There are also other proven techniques in determining when the hay is ready for baling. Generally, hay must pass all of the following 'old school' tests prior to baling.

Test 1
Simply peel back the skin at the nodes with your fingernail. If there is any moisture there at all – it is not dry. If there are no nodes (eg. lucerne), peel the skin back at several points.

Test 2
In cereal hay the nodes will be darker in colour and shrunken when dry. If they are bigger than the stem, it is not dry.

Test 3
Grab some hay from the windrow with two hands. Twist your hands in opposite directions whilst holding the hay (use the motion of peddling on a pushbike!). If the hay is dry, it will break/snap in 1-2 turns. If it doesn't, it is not dry.

Test 4
Take a hammer, get some hay stems and crush some nodes between the hammer and a hard steel surface. If any moisture smear is detected, it is not dry.

TIP:

To speed up the process of baling, consider the use of a super-conditioner to quicken curing time. Also keep in mind the ideal texture for hay is soft and not prickly. This parameter again can be affected by maturity when cut and curing time.

Get your Hay testing equipment direct from the Feed Central Shop

DELMHORST F-2000
MOISTURE METER

- 45cm Probe used for testing large bales
- Electrode Probe Handle for ease of testing
- Short Pin Windrow Testing Probe
- Moisture Meter Calibrator
- Exclusive PVC Travel Tube
- 3 Year Warranty

STAINLESS STEEL
HAY CORER

- Bagging Attachment prevents contamination
- Efficient Design for fast Hay sample collection
- Stainless Steel Components
- Cleanout Rod to ensure complete cleanout between Lots
- Stainless Steel Serrated Tip & protective cap

For more information or to order, call us on **1300 669 429** or visit **www.feedcentral.myshopify.com**

Baling

Here are some aspects you need to consider/ look out for during baling:

✓ Do not rush hay making.

Baling hay with high moisture will:

- » Cause hay spoilage by damaging the fresh green hay colour in the bale. In Feed Central's system, anything baled above 18% moisture will have a maximum visual grade of FCB.
- » Dramatically increases the potential of fire caused by self-combustion. This is a serious and very real risk.

✓ Making quality hay is all about timing.

You will never be able to recover the quality if you get the timing wrong. When baling a large area, it can be hard to always bale at the ideal moisture, therefore compromises need to be made. But it's better to make hay too dry than too wet. Sometimes hay becomes too dry to bale, so wait for dew before baling; or consider using a steamer. Please note, an experienced hay contractor can assist you further in this process.

✓ Colour

The ideal colour for hay is a bright green colour. This is affected by maturity and curing time. The longer the hay is on the ground after it is cut the more chance that it will be weather damaged or bleached by the sun. Always check the forecast when you are about to cut hay.

✓ Texture

The ideal texture for hay is soft and not prickly. This parameter can also be affected by maturity when cut and the curing time.

✓ Stems

Aim to have thin stem diameters. Thicker stems will lead to an increase in fibre content which is not desirable. Having smaller row spacings can help to keep your stems thinner.

✓ Moisture

Aim for all your hay bales to have a moisture range of between 10-16%. This will ensure that no fermentation will occur in the bale after baling and that your hay is not too dusty. To make sure that the moisture is correct always use a moisture meter. Also, consider the use of inoculants to safeguard against moisture spikes.

✓ Contamination

Contamination of the bale can occur when you are storing the hay. Ensure that the surface of the storage has a large amount of residual hay, is covered in a plastic lining or is compacted dirt. This will help ensure that dirt and rocks do not contaminate the bottom bales of your stack.

✓ Weeds

If you know that a certain part of your paddock has weeds in the crop, then consider stacking these bales separately after baling.

✓ Bale Integrity

Avoid oversizing bales and remember that bales will be moved at least 3 times before processing. If you over-size bales it could cause strings to break and make bales difficult to transport, stack and store.

Baling Times

✓ **Lucerne Hay**

Ideally 5-10% of the plants should be flowering. Pre-Flowering produces better Feed Tests and higher yields over the season.

✓ **Cereal Hay**

Ideally 80-100% of the plants should be flowering.

✓ **Vetch Hay**

Early flower, no pods.

✓ **Canola Hay**

Full flower with little to no pods.

As a general rule, the younger a crop is cut, the higher the ME and CP values on the feed will be.

However, bulk yields peak around full flower/ early milky dough seed, so a balance needs to be found.

Crops cut pre-head emergence are generally very hard to dry down/ cure. It is best to wait. Heads that are still in the boot can cause issues for curing time. It is important to take care when the crop contains plants at different stages of maturity. This is likely to be the case for drought-stressed crops.

Storing

Hay stored on your property is a valuable asset, so you must protect it. Listed below are some valuable tips on where to store your hay and protecting your asset correctly. Obviously, the best place to store your hay is in a hay or machinery shed. Move machinery out of the shed (even the one with the green paint) and put the hay in there.

✓ **If you have a shed, put the hay in the shed**

✓ **Stacking round bales outside**

If stacking outside, do not stack round bales on top of each other, the water just runs down one onto the other. Simply stack them sausage style, with a ute distance between rows, that way you can get between rows to slash or spray etc.

Hay naturally sheds water, but when hay sits in water it absorbs it; therefore, damage is more likely on bottom bales than top bales. Always ensure haystacks are not located in old floodways or low-lying areas.

Fence lines can divert local water during a heavy downpour. Consider carefully where you position stacks along fence lines and contours. Create good drainage between stacks so water does not flow off one stack and then underneath another. Grade a small diversion bank if this is a potential problem. Store your hay in an area that is well drained and dry, with good all-weather access.

✓ **Stacking large squares outside**

If you **must** stack outside you are best to stack 6 bales high and 1 bale wide, stacked closely together. Moisture inside the bale must be checked before stacking to avoid combustion fires (regardless of whether stored outside or sheded).

Tarps or Hay caps are low-cost and effective but are not a long-term storage option.

✓ **Shed Floor**

Moisture will rise from soil inside a shed. Ensure the shed floor area is well drained. Leaking roofs or poor drainage may cause a shed fire even if the hay went in dry.

✓ **All-weather access**

Hay sales often come during wet/cold periods, so good truck access can make or break a sale.

Machinery and Maintenance

✓ **Have you got the machinery you require?**

Or are you better off getting a contractor into perform some of the work? What is their availability.? Timing to perform jobs is critical.

Staff

✓ **Spread the workload over a longer period.**

Sheds

✓ **Storage gives you options and protects your hay from loss and deterioration.**

Stacks outside 6 high need to be sold quickly to reduce losses. After 6 months the top and bottom bales (1/3 of your production) may be damaged and the overall product more difficult to sell, even at a reduced price, or even potentially unsalable.

Storage and Cashflow

The present season we have seen some very good quality hay produced over a large areas of NSW, Victoria and South Australia, with good prices achieved.

In discussions with growers, they have confirmed hay production returns have out-performed their grain returns on a Ha basis again; but look at your markets and what your cashflow requirements are.

Livestock eat 365 days of the year but the hay market differs from the grain market in that there is not always a buyer every day for your hay. Quality hay sells with the majority sold within the 12 months of production. Hay should yield twice as much as grain. If you have the cashflow and storage, then you can ride the market and sell when it is best for you, not rush into the market. How many tonne can you shed?

Hay vs silage - pros & cons

The majority of our buyers are geared to feed hay. From Feed Central's experience, the key strengths and weaknesses of hay and silage production are summarised below:

HAY PROS

- **Efficient to transport** with lower costs on a dry matter basis compared to silage and straw .
- **Lower delivery costs** when taking into consideration protein, metabolisable energy, neutral detergent fibre etc.
- **More contractors** are equipped to make hay
- **Lower baling costs** per tonne
- **More market outlets**.

HAY CONS

- **Can be exposed to weather damage** whilst curing.
- **Feed test results are generally lower,** when compared to silage.
- **Degrades faster** if stored unprotected outside (must be shed stored).

WRAPPED SILAGE PROS

- **Greater quality feed test results** compared to hay.
- **Less exposed to weather damage** due to rapid airing condition**.**
- **Unaffected by the type of storage** and storage surface.
- **Good silage is free of weed seeds.**
- **A good fodder conservation option** when consumed on the same farm it is produced.

WRAPPED SILAGE CONS

- **Transport costs are higher** on a dry matter basis compared to hay (with silage you are carting a lot of unnecessary water).
- **Higher delivery cost** based on protein, metabolisable energy, neutral detergent fibre on a dry matter basis.
- **Baling cost per tonne is higher.**
- **Less market outlets & demand.**
- **The plastic wrap of silage tends to get damaged during handling**.

As a general rule, when pricing silage against hay, simply divide the price of hay by 2.5, because a 'normal' bale of silage is approximately between 50-75% water.

For example:

If the hay costs $225 per tonne, then the silage price would need to be $90 per tonne to be roughly equivalent. We recommend that buyers calculate the cost of silage on a dry matter delivered basis, which almost always is dearer than hay.

In summary...

many people, including Dairy farmers, strongly advocate silage production and consumption. From a marketing perspective, Feed Central advises that you make silage with EXTREME care. If you are going to use the product (and not sell it), silage could be a better feed choice.

FEEDcentral

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BUYERS love our BUY SELL TEST platform because it tells them where the product is; who owns it; what the price is and where it is.

- ✓ **Buy Online With Confidence**
  Each listing displays all quality information along with photos and inspectors comments (if available) so that buyers are able to purchase with confidence direct with the seller.
- ✓ **Feed Alliance Service**
  Feed Central also offers a premium supply chain management service to intensive beef and dairy businesses .

New season product for sale now and ready to be viewed online
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Feed Central leads Australia's domestic feed industry in the quality testing of hay, straw, silage and grain:

- ✓ We hold the exclusive license to Dairy One calibrations in Australia
- ✓ Testing using AusScan calibrations
- ✓ Testing grain to GTA standards
- ✓ Visual assessment of hay to Feed Central standards both in-lab and on-farm
- ✓ Numerous other tests available via our partner laboratories

Dairy One Forage Laboratory
Grain Trade Australia
AusScan Online

Test your product today and know the quality of what you've produced
go to www.feedcentral.com.au/feed-testing

for more information call **1300 669 429** or visit **www.feedcentral.com.au**

Let's talk about straw

Straw has many uses, including roughage in feedlot diets, maintenance of dry cows, or as a drought supplement, garden mulch, mushroom production or animal bedding. It has limited nutritional value; on a dry matter basis. Straw is expensive to transport because legal pay loads of straw on a truck of any size are rare. As always heavy and ultra-heavy bales are highly preferred due to reduced bale weight.

If I bale straw, can Feed Central sell it?

Yes, Feed Central can advertise and market your straw for sale and we often have contracts open.

High density bales and heavy bale weights are highly desired advantages with straw, as well as clean bales and the straw being bright in colour and fresh in smell.

Long or short straw lengths?

The long and short of it is… Feedlots/ration inputs are generally looking for Straw with consistent length of well-made bales with good colour, no dirt and a fresh smell. Feedlots today would prefer windrowed straw over header tailings, at 12-15cm length, with knives in the baler. However, they will, at times, accept full length and header tailings. Long straw is still popular with the mushroom industry and some others.

Wheat or Barley Straw?

Barley straw traditionally has been preferred but this has gradually become less so. Price has become a big driving factor, as long as the grade/quality is equivalent, so there is not a significant difference between wheat and barley straw.

Enhancing Cereal Hay Production with Plant Tissue Testing

Kimberley Detmers BSc
QUALITY SERVICES OPERATIONS MANAGER

Cereal hay production is a crucial component of the agricultural landscape, providing essential fodder for livestock and contributing to the overall sustainability of farming operations. To optimise yields and ensure the health of crops, farmers are increasingly turning to advanced agricultural practices. One such practice gaining prominence is plant tissue testing. This method offers valuable insights into the nutritional status of plants, aiding farmers in making informed decisions to enhance crop productivity and quality.

Some of the benefits of plant tissue testing for cereal hay production are:

1. Precision Nutrition

Plant tissue testing allows farmers to gauge the precise nutrient levels within the plants. By analysing the concentration of essential elements such as nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and micronutrients, farmers can tailor their fertiliser application strategies. This precision nutrition approach ensures that crops receive the right nutrients in the right amounts, promoting optimal growth and development.

2. Early Detection of Nutrient Deficiencies

Early identification of nutrient deficiencies is crucial for preventing yield losses and maintaining crop health. Plant tissue testing provides a proactive means of detecting nutrient imbalances before visible symptoms manifest. By addressing deficiencies promptly, farmers can implement corrective measures, such as adjusting fertiliser formulations or applying foliar sprays, to rectify the nutritional status of the crops.

3. Cost-Effective Resource Management

Incorporating plant tissue testing into the agricultural management strategy allows for more efficient use of resources. By precisely tailoring fertiliser applications based on the specific needs of the crops, farmers can avoid over-application of nutrients. This not only reduces production costs but also minimizes environmental impacts associated with excess fertiliser runoff.

If you would like to know more about this type of testing contact Feed Central to hear about their standard and customised testing packages. Agronomist consultation will provide better testing and more useable results.

By Kimberley Detmers BSc, Quality Services Operations Manager

A shed gives you the ability to wait for ideal market conditions to sell your product.

The reality of selling hay off the paddock

This season (24/25) we expect to see limited buyers purchasing hay off the paddock. It's important to remember that livestock eat 365 days of the year, not just when you are making hay.

Unlike the Grain industry, the Fodder industry has no big accumulators, storage/warehousing systems, futures markets, very few speculators and generally, only operates in the physical market. This is probably a good thing, however it does mean that at times the fodder industry works slightly slower than the Grain industry, but it still works.

For this reason, having hay sheds on your property provides multiple benefits and is considered a market requirement. There has been a significant growth in hay sheds over the past 5-10 years. The majority of our buyers will only buy shed-stored product. A shed gives you the ability to wait for ideal market conditions to sell your product. It also allows you to engage in forward contracting as these buyers always request for their product to have weather protection. Sheds can also significantly boost the market value of your property and mean you do not lose value over the years despite being on your depreciation schedule.

It's important to be prepared to get bales stacked ASAP after baling to avoid weather damage on paddock-stacked bales. If you have limited shed space, have in mind that round bales stack and store better outside, over large square bales.

A marketing period of 1-6 months after baling is realistic but fluctuating seasonal conditions can extend this to 6-12 months or longer, which is similar to many grains.

As already mentioned, in a high yielding season, hay may carry over into the following season. Remember, buyers need hay all year round, not just when you are producing it, so storing and selling later can be a more profitable option. The most efficient place to store hay is on your farm, in a shed with all-weather access.

Feed Central's Web Marketing Service connects buyers and sellers 365 days of the year. This being said, Feed Central operates an extensive Forward Order program. This program puts in place contracts between suppliers and buyers. The contracts are tested, binding and enforceable. Feed Central contracts have a delivery spread built into them, that clearly defines the period of time for which the product needs to be held on farm.

ACTION
THE BIG SHED PEOPLE

PREVENT DRY MATTER LOSS AND MAINTAIN THE QUALITY OF YOUR HAY WITH AN ACTION HAY SHED.

YOUR TRUSTED FARM SHED COMPANY PH: 1800 687 888

What prevents your hay from selling?

We talk to a lot of producers about what will help your product sell, but this season we wanted to outline some notable issues that could affect the saleability of your hay.

Here they are:

- **Not knowing the quality of your hay**
  - » Have you got your hay Quality Assured (Feed Tested, Visually Graded etc)? These are all important marketing tools that the Feed Central selling system tackles first when we market hay for sale. By knowing these things, the buyer will understand the true quality of the hay.
- **Wrong price point**
  - » If you're not keeping yourself up to date with the market (you can do this easily by reading our Hay Market Report or reading our Feed Registry), then the chances of your product being at the wrong price point are extremely high. The market can move quickly in terms of price, so it's important to keep yourself in the loop.
- **Not keeping your advertising up-to-date**
  - » Whether you advertise with Feed Central, in the local paper, social media, online, or anywhere else you must keep your advertisement up-to-date with the correct description, price, details and quantity. Buyers don't know what they don't know.
- **Poor quality**
  - » Poor quality hay will sell last. It's what we see every year, buyers want quality, so they snap up those deals first. Poor quality hay must be priced appropriately, and producers need to understand that it may get picked last. That doesn't mean it won't move, (unless quality is very poor) but it won't move fast.
- **Damaged product**
  - » Weather or rodent damage will negatively affect the saleability of your hay. Buyers want quality.
- **Inconsistent bale weights**
  - » Buyers want to know the true weight of your bales and they want them to be heavy!
- **Strange bale sizes**
  - » 8x4x3 is what the majority of the market wants.
- **Shedding**
  - » The Feed Central sales team are reluctant to sell anything that is not shedded. Put simply, we have had too many bad experiences.

How to pick a hay contractor

Machinery manufacturers have put a lot of effort into producing a solid and heavy baler over recent years. So (as a generalization), a contractor with newer gear should be able to make heavier and better shaped bales than a contractor with older gear.

Following are a few things to look for in a hay contractor:

- **HD Baler**
  - » We strongly encourage you to engage a contractor with a high density baler. High density balers not only make heavier bales, but they are also much faster.
- **Moisture Monitoring System on their baler**
  - » A contractor who has a moisture monitoring system on their baler, such as a Gazeeka, should be sought. This enables the constant monitoring of moisture levels and can help you avoid stacking high moisture, potentially dangerous bales, into the shed and therefore mitigating the risk of hay fires.
- **Fair pricing agreement**
  - » Most contractors charge per bale. Be very careful here. Lighter bales make more money for a contractor, while heavier bales mean less work stacking, loading and more profit for the grower. Lighter bales mean higher freight costs and a lower selling price for your hay. Talk to your contractor about this — put bale weight parameters into your baling contract. Contractor rates have risen recently. Discuss their prices with them and fully understand the increase. Question them if fuel is included or not in the price.
- **Written Contract**
  - » These days it is not uncommon for growers to have a written contract with the contractor. This is something to consider. When making a verbal or written contract, we strongly suggest you cover bale weights and timing.
  - » Contractors can pick up other jobs and some contractors (not all) will give preference to larger jobs. We suggest you talk about this in your discussions and agreement with your chosen contractor.

You can find a full list of contractors from all around Australia on our Contractors Registry on our website. This registry is to help you find a contractor that will suit your needs. These contractors have a range of different equipment and specialities listed for your convenience. We encourage you to pick your own contractor.

Let's talk about bale weights

Feed Central strictly pays the buyer and seller the same weight, using where possible the same weigh point. In most cases, a certified weighbridge docket will be provided.

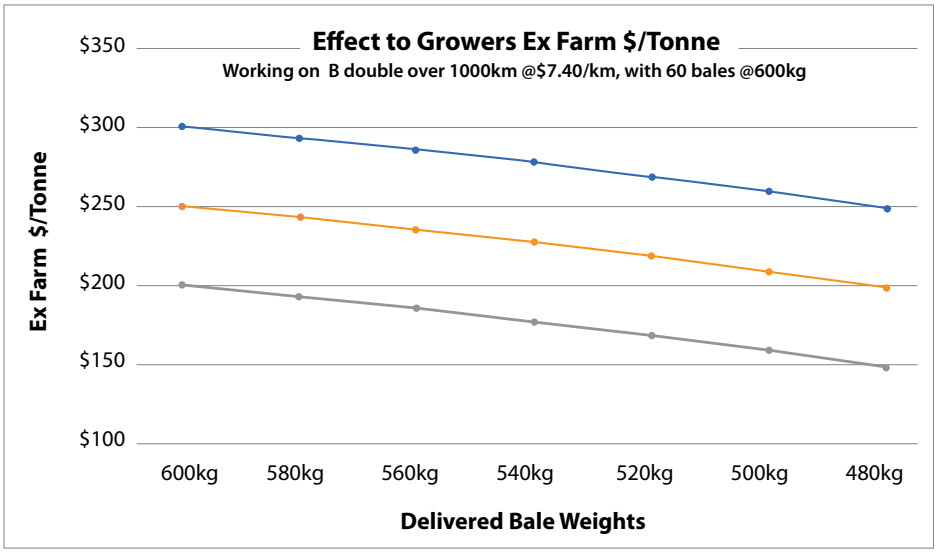
All loads, sold using Feed Central, are contracted by tonnes NOT by the bale numbers. The Grower has the responsibility to provide accurate bale weights at or before time of contract.

Penalties may apply if bale weights are under the expected minimum as written in the contract. This will be used to cover any additional transport costs. Bale weights (and subsequent tonnes per load) are confirmed by the Weighbridge Docket from the carrier.

As an Example,...

*A Grower estimated his Oaten Hay bales to weigh 630kg. When a sale is made and contract written, the weight shown is 37.8 tonnes, **BUT** the weighbridge shows the bale weight is only 580kg. This makes the total tonnes only 34.8 but the freight charged stays the same. So the Buyer receives 3 tonnes less than he wanted, but still had to pay the same price for the freight.*

The Grower was paid only for 34.8 tonnes not for the original quote. The result is an unhappy Grower and an annoyed Buyer who feels that the Feed Central Website is not to be trusted.

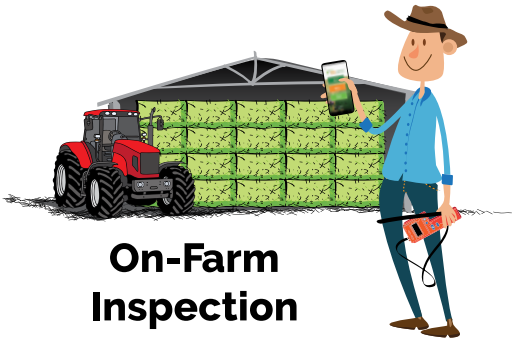


FEED CENTRAL'S

Quality Assurance Process

Quality Assurance at Feed Central all starts with you.

Your hay is our concern. Don't just do a great job making your hay. Let us do a great job assessing, testing, marketing, selling and transporting it. Our Laboratory has the right test for every product. We have the team and the resources to find the right buyer for every product.



On-Farm Inspection

Sample Received

Feed Testing

Quality Certificate

Advertised For Sale

What about the mice?
Our top tips for handling mice

Mice issues are commonly known to build up where there is an abundance of feed and a warm Autumn.

One of Feed Central's Platinum Hay Growers, located west of Forbes NSW sent us these photos *(right)* showing how he has prepared early for any potential mice invasion.

His ingenious idea to create a mice barrier around his Hay sheds has protected thousands of tonnes of valuable hay.

His solution is corrugated iron sheets secured with steel pickets on hard gravel ground. Crusher dust & gravel has then been pushed up around the steel sheets to seal the bottom entry point.

This grower is seeing mice climb up the steel posts and running along the top of the corrugated iron sheets at night but has noted mice internally trying to get out to access water. He has a baiting system set up inside the barrier to take care of those who dare to enter.

Our area manager, Steve Page, and our Rover inspectors check each lot for evidence of mice damage or contamination.

If you would like to discuss your storage options or methods with us please do not hesitate to contact us on 1300 669 429.

DOWNLOAD OUR

MICE MANAGEMENT BOOKLET

for more tips about Mice Management

CLICK CODE

or navigate to

https://www.feedcentral.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Mice-in-hay-fact-sheet.pdf

Disclaimer: *Feed Central has prepared this information as there is a shortage of information on this subject, this is not complete or "expert" advice. Please do your own research and make your own decisions. Feed Central Pty Ltd will not be held responsible for decisions made and action taken as a result of information in this fact sheet.*

FROM SEED TO FEED...

Feed Central is Australia's largest online hay sales platform, and we have over 21 years' experience in understanding and providing what buyers want. Increasingly, buyers want to know the details of the crop, right from seeding.

Our "Seed to Feed" program supports the agricultural supply chain. By seamlessly integrating each stage from planting to baling, it ensures transparency and traceability. End users can understand your lot of hay right from the beginning, which gives great confidence in setting forward contracts.

This approach also fosters local economies, as it emphasizes community collaboration and supports small-scale farmers. Additionally, the "Seed to Feed" model streamlines distribution channels, allowing our Account Managers to keep their clients fully advised on the progress of your crop and the health of the product.

FEEDcentral
HAY • BUY • SELL • TEST

Forward Orders & Contracts

A Brief Overview

Feed Central forward order contracts allow buyers and sellers to rest secure in the knowledge that their feed supply is established and managed by independent professionals with experience in the field.

- ✓ Budget and plan your production in advance.
- ✓ Flexible delivery options.
- ✓ Expert contract management.
- ✓ Backed and supported by Feed Central's unique quality certification system.
- ✓ 'Hassle-free' - all freight, quality assurance and payments are managed for you under the contract.
- ✓ All contracts are legally binding and are executed through Grain Trade Australia based contracts.

FOR BUYERS

Buyers - Feed Central Forward Order Contracts ensure you have a reliable supply of good quality feed. You're protected from seasonal and market fluctuations, and quality is assured through strict visual grading specifications, sampling procedures and feed analysis. Contracts are flexible enough to accommodate your cash-flow and seasonal requirements.

It's the smart and profitable way to buy feed.

FOR GROWERS

Growers - with a Feed Central Forward Order contract in place, you can grow and harvest with confidence. Your contract is flexible enough to accommodate variation in growing conditions and is supported by Feed Central's experienced sales and logistics experts.

It's the smart and assured way to market your hay.

Forward Orders - Benefits at a Glance

OPTIONS	Forward Contracts	Standard Contracts
Security of long term supply to a pre-determined quality	✓	X
Have hay grown specificatlly to suit your needs	✓	X
Ability to budget and manage your cash flow	✓	X
Price stability and control	✓	X
Growers plan your production and hay/grain harvest in advance	✓	X

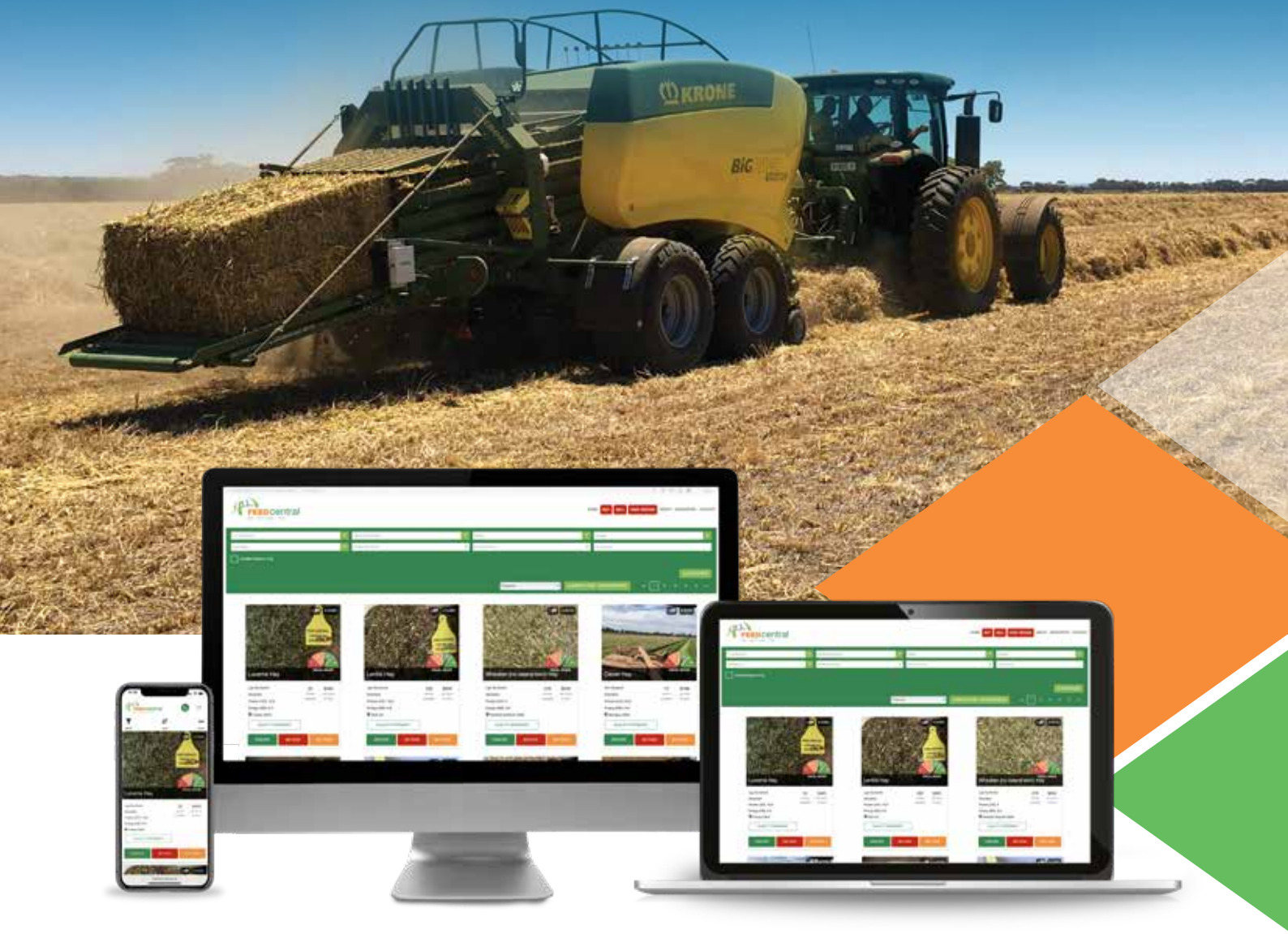
We are here to help

Your Feed Central Sales Team is on-hand to set up your customised Forward Order Contract.

Phone **1300 669 429** or visit **www.feedcentral.com.au**

Our Promise
to deliver as described, on time, first time, every time.

Is there a smarter, simpler way to sell Hay?



National Marketplace.

Get Your Hay Quality Assured.

Every lot is On-Farm Inspected and Feed Tested. This ensures you and we know exactly what you're selling with the help of our Quality Certificates.

Online System

Backed by a team of real people.

Simple Mobile Friendly Website.

List, update and view your Hay online easily - buyers love our website!

Your Choice

Use our online service or talk to our expert team on 1300 669 429.

FEEDcentral
HAY ▸ BUY ▸ SELL ▸ TEST

FEEDCENTRAL.COM.AU | CALL 1300 669 429

SELL NOW