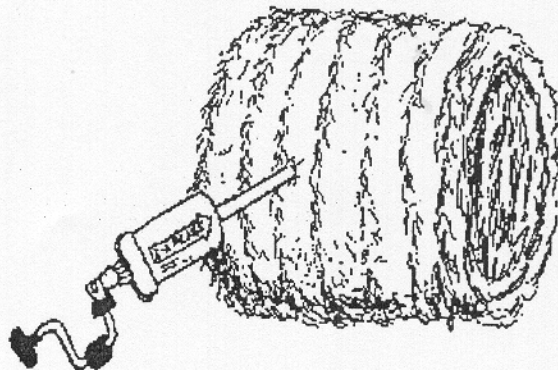
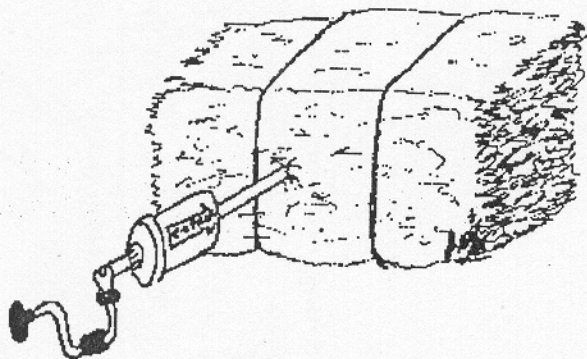


How to Take a Hay Sample

by Karen F. Spivey, Agricultural Extension Agent

The reliability of a hay analysis report is only as good as the sampling technique, amount of sample provided and information provided on the analysis information form. To obtain an accurate estimate of nutritional value, it is necessary to take a representative sample from each "lot" of hay. A lot is defined as hay from one field harvested within a 5 to 7 day period, assuming similar harvesting and curing procedures. Once the lot has been identified, take enough subsamples from bales in that lot to fill at least a one pint plastic bag.



A core-type forage sampler, available for loan from the Cooperative Extension Service in many counties, is the best method of collecting hay samples. A representative cross-section of stems and leaves from hay bales can be obtained by sampling the bale at a right angle to the way the hay is wrapped. A good rule of thumb is to take subsamples from at least 10 bales within a lot and mix to obtain a composite sample that will at least fill a pint bag.

Grab samples may be taken from hay, but due to shattering of leaves and the inability to grab a true cross-section from a bale, this method is less accurate than a core-sampler. If taking grab samples, break open the bales before sampling to reduce leaf shattering.