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## **Feeding During a Drought**

With any recipe, it takes the right blend of ingredients to make the perfect batch, but if something is missing, then the nutritional value changes. K-State experts offer advice on how to provide nutrition when pastures are missing a key ingredient, rain.

It makes sense that when pastures don't receive adequate rain, the grass isn't able to meet nutritional needs without supplementation. Producers will likely need to start feeding hay earlier than usual. Now is possibly a good time to use that hay that has been sitting for a few years. While older hay does not hold the same nutritional value as new crop forage, because microbes and weather break down the carbohydrates, protein and vitamins. But the value resides in saving the current season's hay for use further into the winter feeding season. To account for the declined quality, and to provide a balanced ration, testing the hay is important.

Limiting the amount of time livestock have access to hay each day is another management strategy, preventing waste. Referring to bovine, by allowing cows access to hay only six to eight hours a day, they'll get the same amount of nutrition as they would with free choice access. By moving them out of the lot, cattle will waste less because they aren't tossing it around.

Another strategy is grazing crop residues. Crop residues can be a great feed source, but the greatest nutritional value is on the first day the livestock are turned out. The quality decreases with time passing, quickly. Grazers will eat the leaves and grain on the ground first and then the stalks, which have less nutritional value. Adequate fencing and water are other considerations and could be additional costs.

On September 26, there will be a Drought Discussions meeting for all livestock producers at the Cherryvale Community Center at 6 p.m. This is a responsive meeting due to forage shortage, continued drought, and high feed costs. To reserve your spot and a dinner plate at the Drought Discussion Event, please call the Montgomery County Extension Office at 620-331-2690. The meal is sponsored by Community National Bank and Trust of Cherryvale and Commercial State Bank of Coffeyville.

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