

# GRADING STANDARDS

## REVISED HAY QUALITY GUIDELINE FOR NATIONWIDE MARKET NEWS REPORTING

- Livestock and Grain Market News branch has revised the hay quality guidelines for use in the nationwide Market News reporting program. These revised guidelines establish specific objective measurements of value attributes for each quality category of Alfalfa hay.
- The revised guidelines include all parameters commonly used to measure hay quality and also have all parameters in proper relationship to each other.
- Nationwide uniformity of price information is the goal of revising these guidelines for quality designations. It is important for hay buyers in any part of the United States to be able to read any of USDA's hay reports and know the hay prices quoted are consistent from area to area for quality - so that producers and buyers from different areas, can be talking about hay in the report and feel confident they are talking about the same quality.
- The following are the revised national hay guidelines on Alfalfa. Guidelines are also included for Grass Hay. Reporters will be using test parameter(s) prominent in their trade area, visual characteristics, as well as the intent of sale (usage) to determine hay quality.

Table 1: Alfalfa guidelines (for domestic livestock use and not more than 10% grass)

Quality	ADF	NDF	*RFV	**TDN-100%	**TDN-90%	CP
Supreme	<27	>34	>185	>62	>55.9	>22
Premium	27-29	34-36	170-185	60.5-62	54.5-55.9	20-22
Good	29-32	36-40	150-170	58-60	52.5-54.5	18-20
Fair	32-35	40-44	130-150	56-58	50.5-52.5	16-18
Utility	>35	>44	<130	<56	<50.5	<16

ADF = Acid Detergent Fiber      NDF = Neutral Detergent Fiber      TDN = Total Digestible Nutrients      RFV = Relative Feed Value/RFQ = Relative Feed Quality      CP = Crude Protein

\*RFV calculated using the Wis/Minn formula.    \*\*TDN calculated using the western formula. Quantitative factors are approximate, and many factors can affect feeding value. Values based on 100% dry matter (TDN showing both 100% & 90%). Guidelines are to be used with visual appearance and intent of sale (usage).

Table 2: Grass Hay guidelines

Quality	Crude Protein Percent
Premium	Over 13
Good	9-13
Fair	5-9
Utility	Under 5

Quantitative factors are approximate, and many factors can affect feeding value. Values based on 100% dry matter. End usage may influence hay price or value more than testing results.

### Hay Quality Designation's physical descriptions:

- Supreme: Very early maturity, pre-bloom, soft fine-stemmed, extra leafy. Factors indicative of very high nutritive content. Hay is excellent color and free of damage.
- Premium: Early maturity, i.e., pre-bloom in legumes and pre-head in grass hays, extra leafy and fine-stemmed - factors indicative of a high nutritive content. Hay is green and free of damage.
- Good: Early to average maturity, i.e., early- to mid-bloom in legumes and early head in grass hays, leafy, fine to medium stemmed, free of damage other than slight discoloration.
- Fair: Late maturity, i.e. mid- to late-bloom in legumes, head-in grass hays, moderate or below leaf content, and generally coarse-stemmed. Hay may show light damage.
- Utility: Hay in very late maturity, such as mature seed pods in legumes or mature head in grass hays, coarse-stemmed. This category could include hay discounted due to excessive damage and heavy weed content or mold. Defects will be identified in market reports when using this category.

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