

# Using Forage Nutrition Analysis to Manage Livestock Nutrition

## Why Should I Test My Forage?

Understanding nutritional value of all forages and feedstuff aids in providing optimum nutrition to livestock for all needs. Forages can have different feed values depending on when they are processed, and these values should be used in a planned feeding program. It can even save you money if you know how much protein you are feeding and how much your livestock actually need!

**When Should I Test My Forage?** September or before you start to feed a cutting of hay/silage

## How Should I Test My Forage?

Samples should be taken per harvest for each forage field. A forage probe should be used to collect a representative sample from across the field. Sampling a round bale requires probing from opposite curved sides of about 8-10 bales (not the butt end of the bale). For square bales, sample the butt end of 20-25 square bales. **The Harrison County Cattlemen rent a probe, available at the Extension Office for a \$50 deposit.**

*(Hint: it takes about half of a gallon Ziploc bag)*

## What do I do with my results?

If you don't already have an idea of how much energy and protein your livestock need, set up an appointment with your Agriculture and Natural Resources Educator, Ariel. She will discuss managing your forage and livestock nutritional needs.

**STAB YOUR HAY FOR LIVESTOCK HEALTH**

- SAMPLE**  
Use a hay probe to take ~20 probings from different bales of the same field and harvest
- TEST**  
Send to a certified laboratory for analysis. Request: dry matter, crude protein, insoluble crude protein, Neutral Detergent Fiber, Acid detergent Fiber and minerals
- ALLOCATE**  
Review test results and allocate the hay based on livestock needs
- BALANCE**  
Provide results to a trained nutritionist so cost-effective supplements can be recommended and fed along with the hay to meet livestock nutritional needs

**PURDUE UNIVERSITY** Extension Probes on loan at many county Purdue Extension offices. More information on Sampling and Testing: [www.foragetesting.org](http://www.foragetesting.org)

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## What does it cost?

A basic test is \$17.00 (plus shipping) through SureTech Labs. A more in depth mineral analysis is available, upon request.

