Forage Sampling Procedures

- Sample baled hay after curing (usually 17 to 21 days after baling), using a hay probe. This tool is essential for collecting a representative sample and most commercial labs will not accept a "grab sample" of hay. The Extension office has multiple hay probes available for check-out.

- For large round or square bales, the probe should penetrate at least 18 inches into the bale and have an internal diameter of at least 3/8-inch. If the probe is 18 inches or longer, 15 large round bales should be adequate if the "lot" size is about 30-40 bales. A minimum of 12-15 cores is necessary, regardless of lot size. A "lot" of forage consists of forage harvested from one field at the same cutting and maturity.

- Collect one sample from each bale by coring straight in from the center of the end of square bales and from the wrapped circumference of round bales. Place the entire sample into a plastic bucket and mix around and then fill a plastic zip-lock bag for transport. Approximately ½ of a gallon storage bag.

- For chopped or ground hay, collect about 10 small samples during the grinding process and place them in a plastic bucket for mixing then place the sample into a zip-lock bag for transport. If you are sampling a pile, take about one-fourth of the samples from the top half of the pile and the rest from the lower half. This collection process is similar for silage piles too.

- If you have further questions, give us a call at any of our Meadowlark District Offices at:
  Holton: 785-364-4125 **Oskaloosa**: 785-863-2212 **Seneca**: 785-336-2184

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