

Feed Sampling

Feed testing involves both sampling and analysis but often the importance of sampling is underestimated. A feed testing laboratory can only analyse what is submitted and unless the sample is *representative* of the available feed supply, the time and money spent will be wasted.

For example, a bale is thrown from the top of a haystack, the strings are cut and a handful of hay is pulled from the centre, put in a plastic bag and sent in for analysis. Several sources of sampling error are possible:

- Perhaps the bale, being on top of the stack, was one of the last baled. Did that part of the swath receive more rain than that baled earlier? Had it dried more, resulting in greater leaf shattering? Was it from a corner of a field not typical of the rest?
- Was the sampled bale more weathered as a result of being on top of the stack? Had the stack received rain?
- In pulling hay from the bale were leaves stripped off resulting in a sample which had a high proportion of stems?

The goal of feed sampling is to obtain a sample which is representative of the average feed value of the bulk of feed from which it is taken. If there is reason to believe that significant differences exist between one batch of feed and another, then representative samples should be drawn from each batch and submitted for analysis separately.