

Promoting Quality Alfalfa Forage

The Situation

A lack of knowledge exists among growers, buyers, and the general public about recognizing quality alfalfa. This is evident from the results of being able to judge five samples of hay during the fair.

Results from an alfalfa hay judging contest held at the Eastern Idaho State Fair show that 50 percent of the participants cannot determine which samples are high quality. The same percentage cannot determine which samples are poor quality. Most people tend to judge hay based only upon its color.

The increased demand for quality hay has led to an effort to increase knowledge about the factors necessary in producing high quality alfalfa.

The Response

Extension educators, alfalfa dealers, fieldmen, the State Fair Board and the Idaho Hay Association have collaborated to provide a contest and an educational booth about producing high quality hay.

Information is presented to increase interest and knowledge about varieties, diseases, insects, laboratory testing, quality grades, fertilizer, weed control, machinery, and harvest management.

The entire effort has required teamwork by extension educators to promote the contest among producers, assist in sampling for testing, setting up the booth, getting hay judged, and awarding prizes. During the fair, the general public has been given the

chance to judge hay at the booth and receive prizes for the correct answer.

The fair board has provided substantial premiums, ribbons, and a building to sponsor the contest and educational booth.

Achievements

The contest and booth have given growers an opportunity to test and display quality alfalfa at the Eastern Idaho State Fair. Approximately 40 growers from Idaho and Wyoming have participated in the contest.

Education about laboratory tests for protein, acid detergent fiber, neutral detergent fiber, relative feed value, plus visual factors, have given producers a benchmark to strive for in producing quality alfalfa.

Each year, over 200,000 people attend the fair. About 50,000 of these people walk past this booth and are aware of the University of Idaho's participation in this educational effort. Over 1,000 people stop to look at the display and receive further information.

For More Information

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