

# Horse News and Views



Prior to the fall and winter feeding period, horse owners should know the quantity and quality of the hay that they have in the barn.

**Hay quantity** required is easily estimated. Each mature horse can consume approximately 2-2.5% of its body weight in hay. For the average 1,000-lb. horse, this means 20 to 25 lbs. of hay each day for an average of 220 feeding days. This amounts to 4,400-5,500 lbs. per horse per year or, when divided by the average bale weight (e.g., 45 lbs.), translates to 97-122 small square bales.

**Hay quality** is judged by both its appearance and nutrient content.

Appearance includes the types of forage (grasses and legumes), colour, freedom from dust and maturity of the plants harvested. Nutrient content is measured by a laboratory and provides an estimate of the concentration of the various nutrients, depending on the tests ordered. Tests should include the macro minerals (those required in large quantities, by the pounds or kilogram, e.g., crude protein, calcium, phosphorus) as well as some of the micro minerals (those required in small quantities, by the grams or microgram, e.g., copper, zinc). The appearance of hay will provide some estimate of nutrient content to the experienced horse person, but is no substitute for laboratory analysis. Refer to the OMAFRA web site

1. [www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/swine/nutritio.html#laboratories](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/swine/nutritio.html#laboratories) and
2. [www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/info\\_haysamp.htm](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/info_haysamp.htm)

or your local provincial or state extension service for a list of laboratories offering hay analysis and the method of collecting hay samples. Your veterinarian or local feed dealer may also offer this service.

For further information, contact Dr. Bob Wright (519) 846-3412 or visit our web site: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock>

 **Ontario**  
Ministry of Agriculture,  
Food and Rural Affairs

Ontario Association  
of  
Equine Practitioners

UNIVERSITY  
of GUELPH

*Horse News and Views* is prepared by  
Dr. Bob Wright, Animal Health and Welfare,  
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs,  
Wellington Place, R.R. #1, Fergus, Ontario N1M 2W3  
Telephone: 519-846-3412 Fax: 519-846-8101  
E-mail: [robert.wright@omafra.gov.on.ca](mailto:robert.wright@omafra.gov.on.ca)

This version is available for distribution after September 1,  
2005

*Please retain original format of article.*