



# 2016 - Results

October 18-20, 2016

## Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition, Moultrie Georgia

A Cooperative Extension Effort of Auburn University, Clemson University, The University of Florida, and The University of Georgia

The 2016 Southeastern Hay Contest (SEHC) presented by Massey Ferguson was a fierce competition, with 269 entries vying for the top spot. Final results for the 2016 SEHC are listed in Table 1. The results are broken down into the Contest's categories of the contest: warm season perennial grass hay (bermudagrass, bahiagrass), alfalfa hay, perennial peanut hay, perennial cool season grass (tall fescue, orchardgrass, etc.) hay, mixed and annual grass hay, grass baleage, legume baleage, and high moisture legume or grass-legume mix hay. This contest is held in conjunction with the Sunbelt Agricultural Expo in Moultrie, GA. Winners were announced during the opening ceremonies at the Sunbelt Expo on Tuesday, Oct. 18, 2016. In each of the categories, the highest three entries in terms of relative forage quality (RFQ) received cash prizes. First place received \$125, second received \$75, and the third place entry received \$50. Top honors in terms of highest overall RFQ also received their choice of the use of a new Massey Ferguson DM Series disc mower or RK Series rotary rake for the 2016 hay production season plus \$1000 in cash! This year, the overall high RFQ was 254, which was from some extremely high quality alfalfa made at Bohlen and Son Farm in Madison, GA.

Weather is always a major limiting factor when attempting to produce high quality forage. This year, dry conditions throughout most of the growing season caused drought to be a major limitation for many producers. Drought stress increased the incidence of high nitrate levels in the forage in 2016, and 9% of the samples submitted to the contest were disqualified because nitrates were greater than 5000 ppm. Still, the forage quality this year was very high. The average relative forage quality (RFQ) was on par with or equal to the winning values in the Contest's 12-year history. Good management can make a remarkable improvement in forage quality in both favorable and unfavorable weather conditions.

**What is Relative Forage Quality?** In the past, hay quality prediction equations were based on the fiber *concentration* of the hay crop. However, forage crops can have similar fiber content yet have very different digestibility. For instance, Tifton 85 bermudagrass often has a higher fiber concentration than other bermudagrass varieties, yet it is more digestible. This improved digestibility results in enhanced animal performance, but is not reflected using traditional forage testing methods. The Relative Forage Quality index was developed by the University of Florida and the University of Wisconsin to predict the fiber *digestibility* and animal intake of harvested crops. Since 2003, hundreds of warm season samples have been used to

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refine the RFQ equation for bermudagrass and other warm season forages. Currently, all forage sample results from the UGA's Feed and Environmental Water Lab in Athens contain an estimate of Relative Forage Quality. This value is a single, easy to interpret number that improves producer understanding of a forage's nutritive quality and helps in establishing a fair market value for the product.

**How can Relative Forage Quality help me?** Relative Forage Quality allows hay producers to easily categorize and price hay lots based on relative quality. Producers can purchase hay lots depending on its end use. For example, there is little need to feed high-quality hay to livestock that could easily utilize poorer quality forage. Hay with a RFQ of 100 or more can usually be economically fed to maintain beef cows, while hay with an RFQ of 125-150 is adequate for stocker cattle or young growing replacement heifers, and hay with an RFQ of 140-160 is suitable for dairy cattle in the first three months of lactation. It is also easy to see that Relative Forage Quality could provide the framework for a quality hay marketing system. For example, hay with a RFQ of 155 could conceptually be labeled "premium" hay, while hay with an RFQ of 100 could be labeled "fair". This simple system could allow producers to price hay consistently and fairly across harvest maturity, fertilization regimes, or plant species (i.e. bermudagrass, bahiagrass, perennial peanut, or tall fescue).

**Table 1. Category winners from the 2016 Southeastern Hay Contest (269 Sample Entries).**

Categories and Farm	City	State	Crude Protein, %	TDN, %	RFQ	Sponsors	
<b>1. Warm Season Per. Grass Hay: 107 entries</b>							
Bacon's Fields - Jeff and Brenda Ba	Dudley	GA	20.1	66.9	175	 	
ABAC Farm Beef Unit	Tifton	GA	16.0	63.7	157		
Horace Pippin	Thomaston	GA	15.1	63.3	154		
					<b>Category Average</b>	<b>120</b>	
<b>2. Alfalfa Hay: 16 entries</b>							
Bohlen & Son Farm	Madison	GA	22.1	70.7	254		
Steve Mitchell / Mountain Side Far	Taylorville	NC	24.7	71.8	250		
Bill Conrad	Malone	FL	24.7	70.9	238		
					<b>Category Average</b>	<b>206</b>	
<b>3. Per. Peanut Hay: 2 entries</b>							
Stoltzfus Farms	Blountstown	FL	16.9	65.4	168		
Basford Farms	Grand Ridge	FL	15.9	63.0	155		
					<b>Category Average</b>	<b>162</b>	
<b>4. Cool Season Per. Grass Hay: 33 entries</b>							
Eddie Wilson	LaFayette	GA	16.3	65.6	162		
Randall Selman	Armuchee	GA	14.3	63.0	149		
J & B Farms - Jim Raptis	Lyerly	GA	11.2	61.7	140		
					<b>Category Average</b>	<b>125</b>	
<b>5. Mixed, Annual Grass or Other Hays: 44 entries</b>							
Bohlen & Son Farm	Madison	GA	22.7	70.7	232		
Bohlen & Son Farm	Madison	GA	20.8	68.5	180		
Bammann Hay & Trucking Inc	Aubrey	TX	12.6	67.6	175		
					<b>Category Average</b>	<b>129</b>	
<b>6. Grass Baleage: 52 entries</b>							
Walters Farm	Thomaston	GA	22.0	73.30	216		
Ernie Cooper	Lavonia	GA	17.0	73.30	216		
Yon Family Farms	Ridge Spring	SC	16.3	73.30	216		
					<b>Category Average</b>	<b>159</b>	
<b>7. Legume Baleage: 12 entries</b>							
Marcus South	Thomaston	GA	20.2	75.8	223		
Marcus South	Thomaston	GA	17.2	76.1	201		
Marcus South	Thomaston	GA	18.1	74.5	198		
					<b>Category Average</b>	<b>171</b>	
<b>8. High Moisture Legume or Grass/Legume Mix: 3 Entries</b>							
Bill Grubb/Grubb Grass	Comer	GA	22.7	70.9	238		
Castleberry Farms	Gainesville	GA	22.6	67.7	210		
Bill Grubb/Grubb Grass	Comer	GA	21.5	68.7	195		
					<b>Category Average</b>	<b>214</b>	