

2025 Southeastern Hay Contest

PRESENTED BY MASSEY FERGUSON

Lisa Baxter, UGA | Liliane Silva, Clemson | Katie Mason, UT | Uttam Saha, UGA

The Southeastern Hay Contest (SEHC) has proudly recognized our regional producers who grow and harvest high quality hay for the last 21 years. The contest was originally developed by Extension agents for Southeast forage producers. Their involvement was pivotal to the success of the program during its development in 2004 and will continue to play an important role into the future. The SEHC continues to fulfill its mission to bring awareness to the importance of hay testing and managing livestock feed needs through nutritive value determination. The samples are ranked based on relative forage quality (RFQ) and the top 3 entries in each category receive a cash prize. The overall winner also receives a choice of the use of a new Massey Ferguson DM Series disc mower or RK Series rotary rake for the 2026 hay production season plus \$2,000 in cash!

Entries into the 2025 SEHC surpassed previous years and set new record number of entries at **540 submissions from ten states** across the Southeast. Despite climatic challenges over the last year, there has been some very high-quality stored forages produced. This year's category winners are summarized in the table below. The 2025 Top RFQ was in the alfalfa hay category from Beeson Farms from Climax, NC with an index breaking 400. Beeson Farms won the Grand Prize in 2022 (also alfalfa hay) and therefore is ineligible to win the Grand Prize in 2025. As a result, the **Grand Prize goes to Jon Pope from Coats, NC from the alfalfa hay category with another incredible RFQ of 354.**

The SEHC continues to increase its reach and strengthen its commitment to education. Again, we would like to **acknowledge the efforts of our Extension agents**, who engage producers and collect samples. The agent award winners are in the first table below. We encourage you to continue the tradition and “prove your hay is the best” by submitting samples to next year's contest. Submissions are open year-round, check www.sehaycontest.com for more information, or contact your local county agent or forage Extension specialist.



2025 Southeastern Hay Contest Agent Winners

State Award	Agent	County	Entries	Sponsor
Top Florida Agent	Mark Mauldin	Washington	21	 MAYO AG SERVICES
Top Georgia Agent	Greg Pittman	Jackson	100	 GEORGIA AGRIBUSINESS COUNCIL
Top North Carolina Agent	Dan Wells	Johnston	8	 COASTAL SEEDS LLC

2025 Southeastern Hay Contest Category Winners and Overall Winner

Entry	City, State	RFQ	TDN	CP	Sponsor
Warm Season Perennial Grass Hay: 162 Entries, 114 Average RFQ					
Maple Farms	North, SC	157	64.1	13.2	
Lindler Farms	Lexington, SC	155	63.8	14.6	
Sid Prescott	Waynesboro, GA	153	63.6	15.4	
Cool Season Perennial Grass Hay: 59 Entries, 107 Average RFQ					
Freedom Farms	Loudon, TN	181	68.2	18.4	
Brandon Creech	Zebulon, NC	173	67.2	16.2	
Beeson Farms	Climax, NC	156	64.4	12.6	
Alfalfa Hay: 15 Entries, 234 Average RFQ					
Beeson Farms	Climax, NC	400	77.5	27.1	
Jon Pope	Coats, NC	354	75.3	30.0	
Mountainside Farm	Taylorsville, NC	321	74.1	27.8	
Other Legume Hay: 20 Entries, 172 Average RFQ					
Bill Conrad	Malone, FL	246	70.8	20.7	
Walt Guettler	Chipley, FL	228	69.6	15.1	
Anthill Plantation	Quincy, FL	187	65.2	17.3	
Grass-Legume Hay: 12 Entries, 137 Average RFQ					
Walnut Hill Farm	Sharpsburg, KY	233	71.4	21.1	
Chester Farms	Martin, TN	146	64.1	18.9	
Michael Sponaugle	McDowell, VA	146	63.6	10.3	
Warm Season Annual Grass Hay: 54 Entries, 115 Average RFQ					
Pittman Farms	Nicholson, GA	151	63.8	11.3	
WF Farm LLC	Lexington, GA	149	64.3	9.8	
Beeson Farms	Climax, NC	139	62.0	11.3	
Cool Season Annual Grass Hay: 86 Entries, 109 Average RFQ					
Moore Farm	Elberton, GA	208	72.2	19.0	
Hodge Farms	Covington, GA	180	72.0	7.2	
Todd Trice	Madison, GA	174	67.4	14.3	
Grass Baleage: 125 Entries, 148 Average RFQ					
Caldwell Farm and Land	Concord, GA	221	74.0	14.4	
Walters Farms	Barnesville, GA	218	73.5	19.5	
4R Cattle	Williamson, GA	207	73.1	11.7	
Legume Baleage: 7 Entries, 137 Average RFQ					
Walters Farms	Barnesville, GA	191	69.7	14.3	
C & C Farms	McAplin, FL	185	70.8	17.7	
Justin Savage	Yatesville, GA	109	58.1	12.8	
Overall Winner					
Jon Pope Alfalfa Hay Category	Coats, NC	354	75.3	30.0	

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What is Relative Forage Quality?

RFQ is an index used to represent different forages relative to their overall nutritive value (total digestible nutrients) and predicted dry matter intake. The index was developed by researchers at the University of Florida and University of Wisconsin and is considered a better fit for comparing forages (especially southern forages) for accounting for the digestible fiber as determinant of intake. 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 but 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 just considering traditional forage nutritive value parameters. 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. Since 2003, hundreds of warm season samples have been used to refine the RFQ equation for bermudagrass and other warm season forages at the UGA's Feed and Environmental Water Lab in Athens, the official SEHC laboratory.

How can Relative Forage Quality help me?

RFQ allows hay producers to easily categorize and price hay lots based on relative quality, and livestock producers to balance supplemental diet based on the quality of the hay being offered. 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 instance, 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).

2025 SEHC Executive Committee Contacts

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The Southeastern Hay Contest is a collaboration between these 13 University Extension Services.

