

# **2026**

## **Contest Rules & Entry Form**

Entries must be postmarked by **September 1<sup>st</sup>**.

Winners will be notified by **October 1<sup>st</sup>**.

Awards will be presented at the Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie, GA on **October 20<sup>th</sup>**.



# 2026 Southeastern Hay Contest

## Sponsors and Awards

### Awards:

- **Top three entries in each category** will receive cash prizes
  - 1<sup>st</sup> place: \$250
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> place: \$200
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> place: \$100
- **Grand prize winner** (overall highest RFQ) will receive the use of a hay tool for the 2027 hay production season AND \$2000 cash!

### Categories and Sponsors

| CATEGORIES                                                                                           | ANTICIPATED SPONSOR |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Warm Season Perennial Grass Hay</b><br>Bermudagrass, bahiagrass, etc.                             | RW Griffin          |
| <b>Alfalfa Hay</b><br>Any variety of alfalfa                                                         | America's Alfalfa   |
| <b>All Other Legume Hay</b><br>Perennial peanut, white clover, red clover, crimson clover, etc.      | Agri-King           |
| <b>Cool Season Perennial Grass Hay</b><br>Tall Fescue, orchardgrass, timothy, etc.                   | Corteva Agriscience |
| <b>Grass Legume Hay</b><br>Any sample with grass and legume in the mixture                           | Athens Seed Co.     |
| <b>Cool Season Annual Grass Hay</b><br>Rye, ryegrass, oats, wheat, triticale, etc.                   | Southeast Agriseeds |
| <b>Warm Season Annual Grass Hay</b><br>Sorghum, sorghum x sudan, pearl millet, crabgrass, teff, etc. | Barenbrug           |
| <b>Grass Baleage</b><br>Any high moisture grass forage ensiled in wrapped bales                      | Pennington Seed Co. |
| <b>Legume Baleage</b><br>Any high moisture legume or grass/legume forage ensiled in wrapped bales    | <i>open</i>         |
| <b>GRAND PRIZE</b><br>Highest overall RFQ                                                            | Massey Ferguson     |



# 2026 Southeastern Hay Contest

## Rules and Entry Form

To qualify for entry to the SE Hay Contest, the producer and submitting local Extension Agent must submit the entry form and payment **SIMULTANEOUSLY** to:

**Southeastern Hay Contest**  
Feed and Environmental Water Lab (FEW)  
2300 College Station Road  
Athens, Georgia 30602-4356

**All entries must be postmarked by the FEW Lab:**  
**Tuesday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026**

1. This contest is open to any hay or baleage producer from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma (east of I-35), South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas (east of I-35), or Virginia. However, entries must be submitted by the farm where the forage was grown. Because of climatic conditions that differ west of Interstate-35, all samples must originate from fields located east of I-35.
2. Hay/baleage sample, entry form, and analysis & entry fees (\$22 in total) must be postmarked by ***Tuesday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026***. The fee includes the F2 test: standard NIRS testing + nitrate testing” with a fee of \$20 plus an entry fee of \$2 per sample. The contest entry form must be submitted with the sample. If there are multiple entries, a contest entry form must be submitted with each individual sample.
3. Samples can be submitted year-round. Samples received with postmarks after the deadline of **September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026** will be automatically considered for the 2027 contest.
4. **A completed contest entry form must be submitted by a local Extension Agent.** This form requires the signature of your County or Regional Extension Agent. By signing the entry form, the Agent certifies that the producer has met all contest rules/requirements. Agents must assign an entry number by state and county on the entry form. This code will be used as the sample ID for analysis and for judging (ex. FL – Jackson Co-12). The Agent also must ensure that all fields on the form are filled out correctly.
5. Lab analysis samples must be taken from a single lot of hay and from a minimum of 5-10 randomly sampled square or round bales. A lot is defined as forage taken from the same farm, field, and cut under uniform conditions within a 48-hour time period. Submit core samples for testing in a pint or quart sized zip-type bag



labeled with Sample ID as described above. **For guidance on appropriate hay sampling technique, please visit our website [www.sehaycontest.com](http://www.sehaycontest.com).**

6. A portion of the hay should be collected as a grab sample for display purposes *when the sample is collected*. **Display samples should be collected by the Extension Agent into a 1 or 2-gallon zip-type bag labeled with the Sample ID as described above.** No baleage display sample is required due to storage issues. Display samples should be stored in local Extension offices until October 2026.

AGENTS: be sure you keep a copy of the entry form with the display sample. Contest winners will be notified in early October and the winning display samples will be requested. Contest winners who cannot provide a display sample from the lot that was entered will be disqualified. Do not send display samples to the UGA-FEW lab or to the State Forage Extension Specialist unless they are requested.

7. Forage samples must be taken from fields with a **minimum maturity or re-growth of at least 25 days** to ensure fair competition. Hay from fields with less than 25 days of growth will be disqualified.
8. Forage samples for analysis and contest entry **must be collected using a hay probe** type recommended by the National Forage Testing Association. For more, see: [http://www.foragetesting.org/index.php?page=hay\\_probes](http://www.foragetesting.org/index.php?page=hay_probes)
9. Forage samples with **nitrate levels over 5000 parts per million (ppm) on a dry matter basis will be disqualified.**
10. **Dry hay samples with over 18% moisture will be disqualified.** Hay that has been treated with a hay preservative will be allowed within the crop species' appropriate dry hay category, as long as the checkbox on the contest submission form indicates the hay preservative treatment and the moisture does not exceed levels where hay preservative treatment is expected to be effective (i.e., equal to or less than 25.0% moisture). Dry hay must have been dried in the field. The hay must not have been dried in a barn (e.g., forced air, fans, etc.). **Baleage samples must be between 40 and 65% moisture** (35-60% dry matter).
11. **A representative of all winning farms** (farm owner, manager, family member, County Extension Agent, or designee) **must be present at the award ceremony** to receive the award and prize or they will be disqualified.
12. Each farm to be recognized for a top 3 category ranking will receive two free admission passes to the Sunbelt Ag Expo. The awards ceremony is held on the first day of the Sunbelt Ag Expo (October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2026). Full results from their state will be available to the state representatives to use for local contests within their state at their discretion.
13. Contestants who place within the top 3 RFQ scores (eligible for cash prizes) will only be awarded for the highest placement. **Contestants may not claim numerous places within a category** (e.g., Farm A has the 1<sup>st</sup> place RFQ score and their scores on other entries would take 2<sup>nd</sup> and/or 3<sup>rd</sup> place, but they will only receive the 1<sup>st</sup> placement with the remaining places going down the RFQ score list; 2<sup>nd</sup> and/or



3<sup>rd</sup> place will then be replaced by the next best RFQ score).

14. Grand Prize winners (equipment winners) are ineligible for the overall win for the next 3 years. Anyone who was awarded the grand prize in 2023, 2024, or 2025 will be ineligible for the grand prize in 2026.
15. **The SE Hay Contest form is the ONLY form that must be submitted. However, it MUST accompany the sample being entered along with a check for \$22 payable to University of Georgia.** If the form and sample do not arrive together, this sample will not qualify for entry into the contest. If the lab had previously tested forage that was not submitted officially with an SE Hay Contest form and one wishes to enter this forage in the contest, they must submit another sample to the lab accompanied by the SE Hay Contest form and the fee.
16. Entries will be judged using NIR testing procedures by the University of Georgia Feed and Environmental Water (UGA-FEW) Lab. The **entries will be ranked on the basis of Relative Forage Quality (RFQ)**, which accounts for protein, energy, and fiber digestibility. If necessary, ties in RFQ scores will be broken based on total digestible nutrients (TDN) then crude protein values.

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| <p>The Southeastern Hay Contest is open to any hay producer in the southeastern U.S. without regards to race, color, sex, age, disability or national origin.</p> |
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## 2026 Entry Form (use separate form for each entry)

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                    |          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| State:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | County:                                                                                                            | Entry #  |
| Category: (Check Only One <input type="checkbox"/> )<br>1) Warm Season Per Grass Hay <input type="checkbox"/><br>2) Alfalfa Hay: <input type="checkbox"/><br>3) Other Legume Hay: <input type="checkbox"/><br>4) Cool Season Per Grass Hay <input type="checkbox"/><br>5) Legume+Grass Mixed Hay: <input type="checkbox"/><br>_____ % Legume (estimated)<br>6) Cool Season Annual Grass Hay <input type="checkbox"/><br>7) Warm Season Annual Grass Hay <input type="checkbox"/><br>8) Grass Baleage <input type="checkbox"/><br>9) Legume Baleage <input type="checkbox"/><br>HAY PRESERVATIVE USED: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO | Harvest Date: (month/day/year)                                                                                     | Field ID |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Forage Species and Variety: (i.e. Bermudagrass-Tifton 85, Bahiagrass-Argentine, Perennial Peanut-Florigraze, etc.) |          |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Age or Maturity: (# of days from greenup or last cutting)                                                          |          |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Comments:                                                                                                          |          |
| <b>Producer's Contact Information</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                    |          |
| Farm or Ranch Name:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | E-mail:                                                                                                            |          |
| Address:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                    | Phone:   |
| City:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | State:                                                                                                             | ZIP:     |
| Privacy Policy: Contact information will be used by the Contest organizers and sponsors to communicate with participants about their entry and to notify prizewinners. Contest organizers and sponsors may also contact Contest participants with special offers. Participants wishing to OPT OUT of these additional offers must initial here <u>      </u> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                    |          |
| <b>County Extension Office Contact Information</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                    |          |
| County Extension Agent (print)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                    |          |
| Address:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                    |          |
| City:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | State:                                                                                                             | ZIP:     |
| Phone:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Fax:                                                                                                               | Email:   |
| I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, this entry meets all the rules associated with the Southeastern Hay Contest. I also confirm that both the Southeastern Hay Contest Entry Form and a check for <input type="checkbox"/> <b>\$22 (SE Hay Contest Entry Fee) payable to University of Georgia</b> are being sent simultaneously to the UGA-FEW Laboratory.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                    |          |
| County Agent Signature                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                    |          |

**ALL FIELDS ARE REQUIRED** (except the Comments field).

*Please check the rules for a list of species for each category!*