

HAY TEST REQUIREMENTS FOR EXPORT

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Abstract: Export criteria is set by your customer; the country of import and the proper chemical analyses. Phyto Sanitary Certificates are required by some countries. Variances are set by type of hay and restrictions of ports of entry or a combination of both. Rejection is often based on customer misconception of quality, presence of wheat or barley, and foreign matter; all of which necessitates the importance of thorough inspections prior to export to maintain your reputation as a quality exporter.

Key Words: Export criteria; inspections based on visual, field, foreign matter, misconception of color as quality and chemical analyses.

INTRODUCTION

The inspection procedures for exporting of hay are very basic, consisting of four steps. Each of importance, with emphasizes lying on visual and the remaining on proper chemical analysis.

VISUAL INSPECTION

The visual inspection is vital to determine content of foreign matter associated within the hay that is not indicated in lab samples. Visual inspection is essential when Phyto Certificates are required prior to export. Enormous cost can revolve from rejection when the receiving country's importing requirements are not met.

Second guessing another individual's evaluation can be devastating to your reputation as an exporter and should not be substituted.

FIELD INSPECTIONS

Countries requiring Phyto Certification may find you inspecting the crop before swathing in order to assure the absence of weeds, culms and leaves of *Agropyron* spp. grasses and straw from wheat and barley which are rejectionable to certain export hay crops and to validate your own quality control.

FOREIGN MATTER

Detection of foreign matter in the bale can not always be detected by walking the field. Such as residue from a previous crop, stubble, re-rakings, etc.

Another menace is the pocket gopher and meadow mice during the spring mating season when soil is scattered within the swath or windrow by the rodents.

These problems are difficult to detect in the field and virtually impossible looking at a single bale within a stack or dump, however, they do appear when the hay is double compressed and split, exposing the inside composition.

An additional cause of rejection is the adherence of dirt, mud or rock to the bottom bales retrieved from roadside stacks and stack yards.

All of the discrepancies mentioned can be grounds for rejection by the country of import or a claim from your customer.

COLOR

Color; the highest verbalized criteria is perceived as good quality rather than sound chemical judgement. Color codes change depending on the commodity. As an example, we think of Sudan grass as "the greener the better"; the export market thinks "lime green is the best". This is due to their concern of nitrates in the grass forage. They would rather buy nitrogen deficient stressed hay than a good healthy green color.

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Other color involvements are of over matured alfalfa with leaf drop; a customer questions about the red color in hay. From Taiwan - a customer asks, do you have blue flowers in your hay? His business card reads: "blue flower hay dealer" of Taiwan.

Color is essential when determining soundness of export hay. Maintaining a good green, and not an olive or bleached shade, is often a full time job. The National Hay Association and their export development committee has been "spreading the word", actually stressing, in all of their seminars and receptions held throughout the world, "color is not everything and quality is determined by test:."

CHEMICAL ANALYSES

Testing methods are varied from modified crude fiber, neutral detergent fiber, and acid detergent fiber, to near-infrared reflectance spectroscopy. The National Hay Association has promoted the use of the acid detergent fiber test in export marketing. The reason relying on it's ability to measure the digestibility of alfalfa-grass mixtures and forages other than alfalfa, more accurately.

Dry matter analysis is an important reading. More problems are related to excessive moisture. Eleven percent (11%) is considered high, ten percent (10%) or lower is considered logistically sound, the drier the better.

Hay with ninety percent (90%) dry matter can still produce sweat conditions in forty (40) foot containers under varying temperatures and atmospheric conditions. Once the headliner sweats, it continues to recycle the moisture from the vapor to condensate and drip back on the product again for another cycle. Cubes in a container over bales will sweat more because of extra headroom and additional surface area of product per cubic foot. Some measure of control has been by using moisture blankets to cover the product. Shuttling of the blankets to the United States for recycling is cost prohibitive.

Standards have changed from when pellets were the only market. Today, the market has become more competitive internationally, than ever before. We see hay products from Chile, Argentina, Canada, Australia, China, and straw from Taiwan, R.O.C. The United States is superior for quality and others lead for lower pricing. This is due to their lower bulk shipping expenses; at times, subsidized inland transportation; ocean shipping rates, as well as, the adverse nature of the hay itself.