

## **"Wanted! Horse Hay That is Good and Not a Million Dollars!"**

Does not take long to figure out that in this part of the country the summer heat has really taken its toll on hay. What is hay? Well hay can mean several different things to as many different people. Most people think of hay as some type of grass or forage plants that has been rolled up into a large round bale. Or a small square bale of the same grass or forage material. If you are wondering why I am starting out by explaining what hay is? It is because right now as you read this every type of field or pasture, even a ditch on the side of a highway is being cut "raked" baled and then called hay! Ladies and Gentleman, welcome to the largest hay shortage in decades! The effects of this mid western state forage shortage is partly due to lack of rain to make grass grow, partly due to poor land management. Then there is the oldest of villains. People who see a drastic unfortunate set of circumstances and take advantage of people's desperation to make a disgustingly high profit off the misfortune of others!

The effects of the 2011 draught and hay shortage are going to have far reaching ramifications in areas that people just do not comprehend at this moment. This hay shortage is like throwing a rock in your farm pond. Eventually the ripples from the rock hitting the water will make their way all over the pond. Cattle are being sold at bottom dollar prices due to no grass to graze them on. Or a rancher has to sell part of his cattle herd to be able to afford to buy sky high priced hay to keep the rest of his herd from starving! Same goes for Horse operations, selling Horses cheap to get rid of what they actually have no grass to graze them on. Along with having to buy hay, every person who has some type of mammal that requires grass for food is suffering! So many people are feeding hay and spending money like it is the dead of winter! Yet here we are in the summer months, when hay is to be baled and stored for use in the winter. Not to be fed right now!! Beef prices in the grocery store are going to be almost double by the time the economic ripples from this hay shortage hit your town. By now you may be wondering what all this cow/hay drama has to do with your Horse. That is a very simple and easy thing to tell you.

There are a lot more cattle than Horses in this country. Along with the sheer numbers comes the point that cattle make a whole lot more income than Horses do for ranchers. Well Horses are not going to have the supply or quality that they need to stay healthy. Cows can not only survive but cows can thrive on moldy old hay, even baled up trash weeds, the types of things that spell colic and founder for Horses. The price of Hay in the real severely dry areas is reaching close to \$200.00 for a round bale, \$15.00 for square bale of hay. Not that it is even close to best quality of bales being sold. Why is hay in such short supply? Dry conditions and such a large demand for it, all this and more are the cause for such devastation to the hay availability and hay market. I will grant you that point, it is very true. Also is the fact that hay is not a type of product that can be reproduced for market demands. Think of it this way. There is a storm that blows over most apple trees. Everyone needs apples every day. People start to panic knowing apples are going to be scarce to find. Then some people start to hoard apples and charge large amounts of money to transport and sell the apples that are tough to come by. Before you know it, apples are not to be found. If you find them, they are very expensive or of poor quality. This is such the case of the overall hay market.

When people are on the Internet that live over 1,000 miles away from Oklahoma and are selling hay at top dollar! You know things are bad, also things are getting worse. Most farmers and ranchers that bale hay have sold all of their spring first cutting at very big profits. Yet the overall weather pattern has not produced enough rain for the grass to grow fast enough for a second cutting. So the demand is going to go up and the supply down. A small percentage of agricultural acres of hay ground are not going to be able to supply 14 states worth of livestock for long! Now it gets even worse! If a farmer / rancher wants to cash in even big one more time from this hay crisis, since hay continues to go up in price. Especially with winter coming on,

he will bale what he can! Even if the grass is too short to bale many will get what crop they can for the big money! Now the grass is cut too short too soon to frost. You get a type of freezer burn which means in the spring of 2012 the grass will be slow to grow and of less quality than the spring of 2011. Now you have another good chance of a second year of hay shortages and high prices. Unfortunately this hay drama is continuing to be more sickening, and just plain wrong!

Now we finally get to the worst of the worst of this. This part of the reason why hay is so high priced is in my personal opinion, the saddest part of this ordeal! Truck drivers who normally are charging anywhere from \$2.50 to \$4.00 a loaded mile, are now charging anywhere from \$ 6.00 to \$8.00 a loaded mile to haul hay the same distance as before this all started. Then you have someone who has no livestock at all. This person just has a few thousand dollars sitting around collecting dust. They team up to buy all the hay they can. Then jack up the prices and sell it, for as much as any person will pay. Let me take a moment and say that making money and selling things for as much as you can is basic good business. Let the product demand set the market price is what has made this country work!!! Yes I agree, yet that being said! Taking advantage of a person's misfortune to line your pockets with more than a fair profit is just plain wrong. Yet if you have Horses and no grass you will pay what you must just to keep them alive and healthy. These individuals know this. It is like having a water shortage in your home town. A few have control of all the bottle water. They know you need water and you will pay dearly for it. This is not new or even special. Yet it is a big factor on the price you are going to pay for hay. Well now that I have completely made you sad and mad. I am going to escalate this again!

As of this issue being printed, I warn you all! Buy now for winter! Buy now for spring! Try to buy good quality hay and try to find a nice dry place to store it. This is only the beginning ladies and gentleman. I have lived through this type of hay problem once before in my life. We are only part way through what is coming. I want to end this particular lengthy depressing article with these facts. Feed stores only mark up a square bale of hay about \$1.00 - \$2.00 more than they paid for it. The publisher of this great Horse publication may not agree with what I have written. I asked for extra space and warned Leanne of the dramatic and very up in your face topic of this issue. The truth cuts deep yet never leaves a scar. It only hurts once. Lies never heal and if they do heal there is always scar tissue from the event. With this only starting for Horse owners around the Midwest, with winter coming on and hay getting more and more tough to find. Next issue I will give you ways to use less hay and a bit more money on certain supplements and special bagged feeds to keep your Horse's diet and metabolism balanced. Now remember I said your Horse will be balanced and healthy. Not your budget or your check book!!

**By BJ Rickard – The World OF Horses – Stall13.com**  
**View, Print or Save this page, close window when done.**