

- Sampling forages and grain is commonly utilized by Beef and Sheep producers as a start point for designing the winter feeding program. Representative samples need to be taken from 20% of the bales in the total supply of the hay or straw.
- Grain samples can be collected at harvest utilizing grab samples or can be obtained using a grain probe from binned grain.
- Pasture sampling is not common but is not difficult to do and is another step towards ensuring optimal Body Condition score or growth rate for animals on pasture as well as getting the most from the pasture. Clip 10 to 15 one square foot samples from a random pattern across grazing cells or where plant species are clearly different. Timing of sampling can be just before animals are released on pasture. Not all cells need to be sampled if plant species and soil types are consistent. Try to get a representative clip of what the animal will consume. Take scissors and clip the sward at grazing height. Once dried they are ready for packaging and shipping.
- Silage can be quite variable so more frequent testing yields better results for dairy producers. Protein and dry matter need close attention. In barn moisture testers are optimal for precision feeding. For beef and sheep operations sampling monthly as the pile or pits are fed will allow tuning of the ration while working through various layers and harvest points on the field.

Equipment for sampling is generally available on the farm except for possibly a forage probe and moisture tester. These can sometimes be accessed through Extension offices, feed companies, and veterinary offices. Since forage sampling is a process that would be conducted at least annually, having these items on farm is the best approach.

Mainly the needed elements are a four litre bucket to hold the collected material, bags to hold the randomized sample and a marker to record the description of the sample and mark the sample bag. A notebook is also helpful to note this information and any other observations that are important.

To emphasize the value of testing here is a quote from Dr. Dale Blasi from Kansas State, *“The indispensable prerequisite to feed cost control is the result of a forage analysis collected from a representative sample of the forage lot being analyzed.”*