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## **Beef forage analysis offered to state cattle ranchers**

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BURNS, Ore. – Beef cattle ranchers can now get a nutritional analysis of what their cattle eat in a new service offered by the Oregon State University Extension Service.

This is a good time for hay analysis because it's baling season, said Reinaldo Cooke, beef cattle specialist with the Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center in Burns. Fresh hay can easily be tested for its nutritional content.

"Nutrition is a key factor in beef operations," said Cooke. "Forage that lacks protein is a common problem, and winter is an especially critical time because most cattle are in from summer pastures and must feed on hay."

Beef cattle ranchers from across the state can send forage samples for nutritional evaluation and in return, receive customized suggestions on how to improve cattle diets. Recommendations on the suitability of the forage are based on the kind of animal: calf, bull, heifer or a pregnant or lactating cow.

An order form is online at: <http://beefcattle.ans.oregonstate.edu/html/forage/Forage.htm>. Cost of each sample is \$25. Analysis takes about three weeks. Questions can be directed to local county OSU Extension offices, online at: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/locations.php>

All forage samples are analyzed using wet chemistry procedures to ensure accurate results, Cooke said. "However, results are only as good as the sample submitted for analysis. Guidelines should be followed carefully when collecting and submitting samples."

"Over time, we will build a forage database for the entire state and all its many environments," Cooke said. Differences in soils, elevation, precipitation and climate in Oregon make for a big diversity in forage quality.

"The compiled average for each county will give us an idea of what to expect and a standard on which to compare improvement — valuable information for teaching and research."

***About the OSU Extension Service:** The OSU Extension Service is the statewide educational outreach arm of the university; it helps Oregonians find solutions to priority economic, social and environmental issues and delivers research-based educational programs in agriculture, forestry, family and community health, marine and fresh water issues and 4-H youth development.*