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Extension Plant Sciences
Alfalfa Market News
New Mexico Hay Association, www.nmhay.com

Hay Prices for New Mexico **Volume 11, Issue 2** **June 8, 2012**

County	Contact	Premium Hay ($/ton)	Top Quality Hay ($/ton)	Other Hay ($/ton)	Condition/ Market Activity/Cut Complete
Chaves	Sandra Barraza, County Agent	$235-280 large del; $300-320 small in the barn; 12.50/bale		$200 dry cow hay	2nd cut 90%; strong market, demand high; scattered rain showers; hot days, cool nights.
Dona Ana	Jeff Anderson, County Agent	$285 large; $18.50/3-strand bale; $10-12.00/2-string bale		$15-20.00 3-string bermuda	2st cut 100%; hot and dry; reduced yields due to heat and lack of water.
Eddy	Woods Houghton, County Agent	$270-300 large; $300-320 small; $250-280 light striped large		$5-8.00 small grain hays (wheat, oats, barley) – 50 lb bale	Farm with adequate water, 3rd cut; farms with low water, 2nd cut.
Lea	Wayne Cox, County Agent	$285-310 large; $13.00 small	$260 large; $10-11.00 small	Wheat/triticale, $240-250 large; $10.00+ small	2nd 100%; High demand, low supplies.
Roosevelt	Patrick Kircher, County Agent	$250-285 del; $9-12 small squares		Wheat hay, $175-250	2nd cuts started; Small squares active, dairy market sluggish; Hot, dry, and windy; Weevil/aphid pressure early.
San Juan	Craig Painter, County Agent	$220-240 large squares		$200 large	1st cuts nearly complete on NAPI; active market; warm/dry; mild pest conditions
Socorro	Tom Dean, County Agent	$300-325 large; $9.00-10.00 custom bales		Wheat hay, $9-10 per bale	1st 100%; Demand good, hay moving; heavy insect pressure – weevil, aphids, thrips; water supply good for now.
Valencia	Kyle Tator, County Agent	$300-330; $9.00-12.00 small bales		N/A	1st cuts 100%; strong market; hot/dry; Early weevil pressure.

N/A = prices and/or supplies not available at this time

The Centennial History of Alfalfa in New Mexico

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Alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* L.) is one of the most widely adapted domesticated perennial crops in the world and has been an important crop for New Mexico since before statehood. Consequently, we thought it appropriate to write about the history of alfalfa in New Mexico during this year of the state's centennial celebration. A considerable amount of the information for this article was taken from Melton, B. 1988. Alfalfa in New Mexico and the New Mexico Alfalfa Breeding Program. Memoir Series #8. Online: http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/research/agronomy/memoirseries8.html (Verified May 29, 2012). New Mexico State University College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences Agricultural Experiment Station. Las Cruces.

Alfalfa was introduced into Mexico by the Spanish in the middle 1500s and, along with various types of livestock and other crops, was brought from Mexico into New Mexico, and the USA by the colonizer Juan de Oñate in about 1598. The crop was originally grown along waterways where it could be irrigated, and was used for livestock feed. Acreage has increased since statehood and especially since about 1970 (Fig. 1),

possibly due to the development of larger scale irrigation districts during that period as well as the development of equipment for managing larger acreages.

Drought during the past decade has led to a reduction in acreage largely due to stands not being replaced. Because most of the state's alfalfa is irrigated by surface water sources rather than by deeper ground water, such as the Ogallala Aquifer, it is anticipated that a return to average precipitation would lead to a return to nearly 300,000 acres, which appears to be the maximum number of acres the current systems in New Mexico may be able to support (Fig. 1).

In addition to increases in acreage, yield per acre also increased during New Mexico's first one hundred years (Fig. 2) with improvements in equipment and management and the release of improved varieties specifically for resistance to the major alfalfa pests in New Mexico, including bacterial and Fusarium wilts, anthracnose, Phytophthora root rot, stem and rootknot nematodes, and pea, spotted, and blue alfalfa aphids. The New Mexico Agricultural Experiment Station was a significant contributor to improved varieties, releasing NM 11-1 (1953), Zia (1957), Mesilla (1967), Rincon (1975), Doña Ana (1982), Malone (1987), Wilson (1987), and most recently, NuMex Bill Melton (2008). The increase in harvested alfalfa acreage in New Mexico and higher yields per acre led to an increase in total production (Fig. 3). The recent decline in total production corresponds to the decline in acres during the same time period (Fig. 1) and is not due to any major decline in average yields per acre (Fig. 2).

Price increases were not as dramatic early on compared to acreage and yield increases (Fig. 1 and 2), but a significant increase in price has taken place in the last decade (Fig. 4). A 1911 New Mexico Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin (Simpson, H. H. 1911. Alfalfa and corn for fattening lambs. Bull. 79) described alfalfa as a good feedstuff for fattening lambs if prices were about $8.50 per ton. Prices during World War II were $20 to $30 per ton and remained fairly stagnant until 1965 when alfalfa hay prices started to rise consistent with inflation (based on gasoline price increases) until about 2007 when it increased dramatically (Fig. 4). Part of the latter increase also was due to widespread hay and pasture shortages caused by drought. In short, the increase in total production coupled with the price increases caused alfalfa to be New Mexico's #1 cash crop throughout most of the state's first century.

For information about alfalfa management in New Mexico's Second Century contact your County Cooperative Extension office or visit the NMSU Cooperative Extension forages website at: (http://forages.nmsu.edu/).

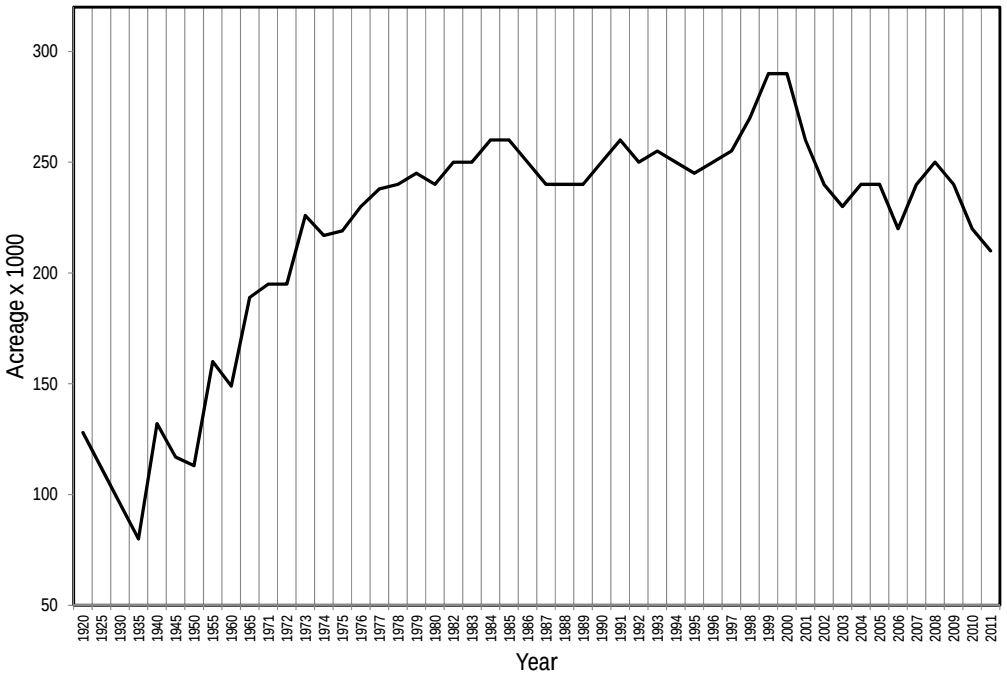

Figure 1. The change in alfalfa acreage in New Mexico from 1920 to 2011.

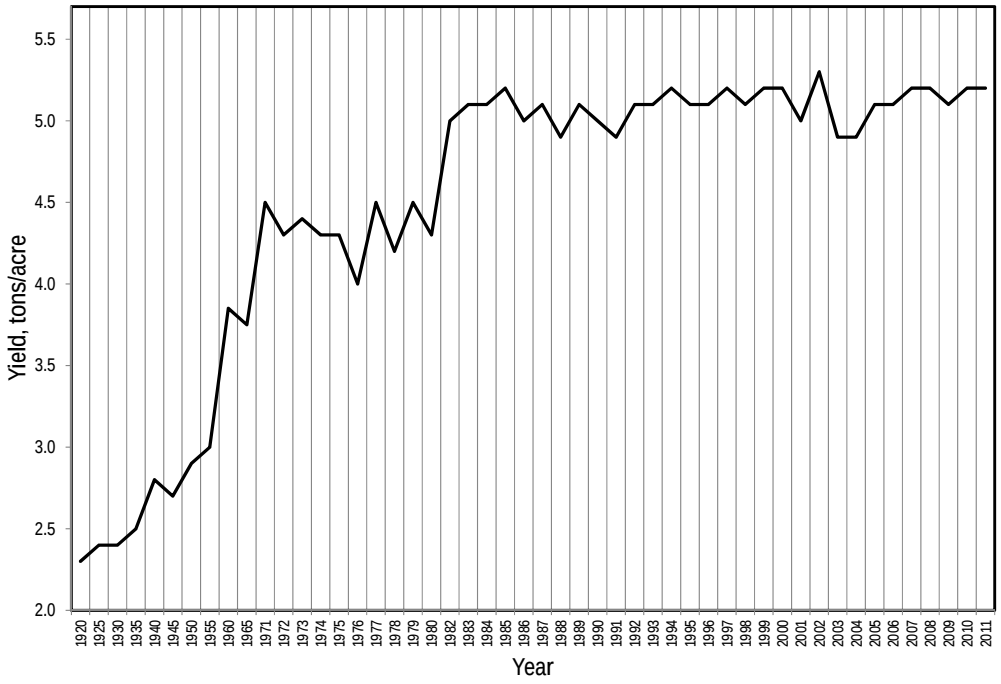

Figure 2. The increase in alfalfa yield in New Mexico from 1920 to 2011.

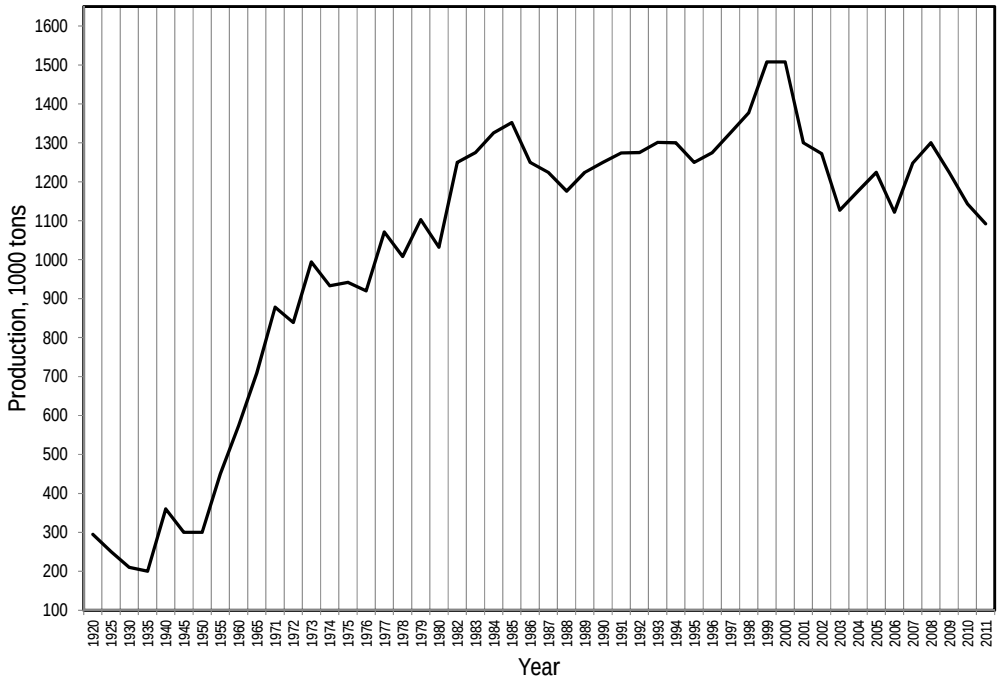

Figure 3. Total annual alfalfa production in New Mexico from 1920 to 2011.

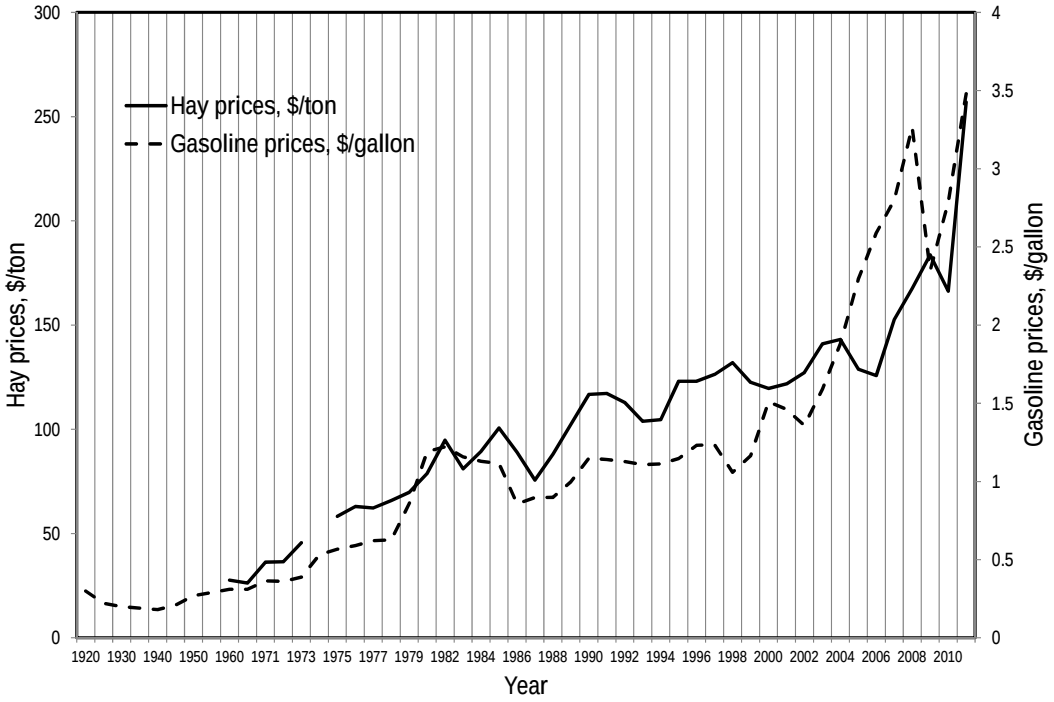

Figure 4. The change in New Mexico alfalfa hay and US gasoline prices from 1920 to 2011.

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