

Visual Hay Assessment Score Card



Hay should make up at least 50% of the diet, therefore, it is important to know its quality. There are two important steps for assessing forage. When selecting your hay, do a Visual Assessment to choose the best quality hay that you can. Then arrange for a Forage Test with your equine nutritionist to determine protein, fiber, calcium, and other minerals plus mould counts. Now you are ready to develop a balanced diet based on your hay quality and the needs of your horse. Use the chart below to score your hay.

Visual Assessment of the Hay		Possible Score	Score of Your Hay
I. Stage of Harvest	1. Before blossom or just heading	26-30	
<u>Example:</u> Timothy Head Length 1. Pre-bud 2. Less than 1" 3. 1" to 4" 4. Over 4"	2. Early blossom stage or early heading	21-25	
	3. Mid to late bloom head	16-20	
	4. Seed stage (stemmy)	11-15	
	II. Leafiness	1. Very Leafy	26-30
	2. Leafy	21-25	
	3. Slightly Stemmy	16-20	
	4. Stemmy	0-15	
III. Colour	1. Natural green colour of crop	13-15	
<u>Note:</u> Check colour inside bale as bleaching occurs on outside of bale.	2. Light Green	10-12	
	3. Yellow to slightly brownish	7-9	
	4. Brown or Black	0-6	
IV. Odour	1. Clean smell of "fresh crop odour"	13-15	
	2. Dusty	10-12	
	3. Moldy-musty odour	7-9	
	4. Burnt (caramel smell/very musty)	0-6	
V. Softness	1. Very soft and pliable	9-10	
	2. Soft	7-8	
	3 Slightly harsh	5-6	
	4. Harsh and brittle	1-4	
		Sub-Total	
VI. Penalties	Deduct for trash, weeds, dirt, etc.	0-35	
Quality Standard	Relative Feed Value	Visual Grading Score	
Prime	= > 151	= 95 to 100	My Score is: _____
1.	= 125 to 160	= 85- 94	
2.	= 103 to 124	= 75 to 84	
3.	= 87 to 102	= 65-74	
4.	= 75 to 86	= 55-64	
5.	< 84	= Below 54	

Sources: Visual assessment from University of Kentucky Fact Sheet AGR-62, Standards from Hay Market Task Force of AFGC, Grading scores from Buckeye Nutrition.