

ALBERTA SHEEP

Feed Testing In Alberta

Feed testing has become a useful tool for producers in the livestock industry. A feed analysis enables farmers to make informed management decisions to maximize their flock's performance during the winter months.

Why Feed Test?

Unless the nutrient content of feed is known their allocation to different stages of the productive cycle is pure conjecture. Undernourished sheep are detrimental to productivity while over-nourished sheep are a waste of valuable feed resources. Maximum dollar returns demand that animal requirements be matched by nutrient intake. This can only be accomplished when nutrient levels in feed are determined through feed testing.

How to Feed Test

One important aspect that is often overlooked is sampling. A laboratory can only analyse what is submitted. If the sample does not appropriately represent the feedstock, the producer's time and money will be wasted.

Hay Bales

- Use a probe to take random samples (i.e. 100 round bales take at least 10 samples).
- ASWC has a probe kit you may borrow if we can arrange to send it out by government courier. Probes may also be available from your local municipality.
- Make sure these bales are from the same cut (each cut must be sampled separately).
- Place these samples in the same container/bucket/bag and mix.
- A hand grab of feed is a poor method of sampling and will distort the analysis due to leaf loss.
- There will be more hay wasted if it is of poor quality.

Silage

- Silage testing should include two tests.
- The first test should be taken while you are silaging.
- The second test should be taken once the pit has been opened.
- Producers will be able to determine if the silage process was successful by comparing the second test to the first.

Grain and Mixed Feeds

- Plunge arm into the feed and sample at least ten different sites.

If you know the quality of the feed available and understand the requirements of your animals you are in a position to save money by allocating your resources wisely.

Feed Testing Laboratories

Please contact the labs before sending sample to inquire if:

- the lab is currently feed testing
- pricing and
- turn around time.

ALS Laboratory Group — drop offs in Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie and Lethbridge, 1-800-667-7645 (testing done in Saskatoon)

Central Testing Laboratory — drop off at 20/20 Seed Labs in Nisku, 1-877-955-7861 (testing done in Winnipeg)

Midwest Laboratories — drop off in Calgary, (403) 250-3317 (testing done in Omaha)

Parkland Laboratory — Red Deer, (403) 342-0404 (testing done in Red Deer)