

Should a custom harvester be harvesting your forage?

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2009 Dairy Forage Toolbox Seminar

Introduction



Digmans



Wepners

Which one is right? - Both!



Why the Wepners work with a custom harvester:

- Focus on core expertise/interests
 - Milking, feeding, breeding & animal health

Limited labor resources



Why the Digmans harvest their own forage:

- 1 Not willing to give up control
- 2 Good source of intermittent labor
- 3 Additional farm enterprise

Advantages of utilizing a custom harvester



Advantages of a custom harvester

- Consistent forage - high level of capitalization

Seasonal labor - labor needs don't interfere with dairy operations

Latest technology - kernel processing, inoculant application, yield mapping

Advantages of harvesting your own forage



Advantages of going it alone

- In control of harvest
- Utilize on-farm labor
- Love the work

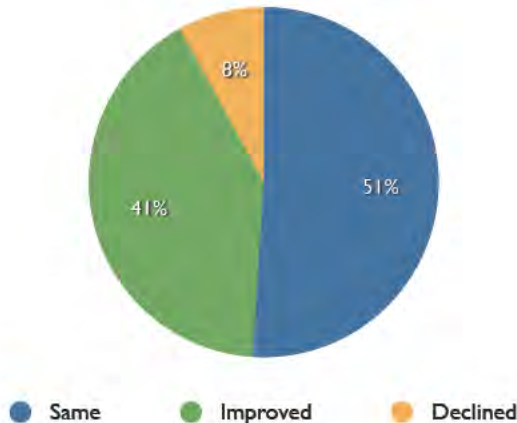
Hay and Forage Grower Survey

Hay & Forage Grower Survey:

- ① E-mail survey - 80 responses
- ② Overall satisfaction - 8/10
 - Dependability
 - Communication
 - Feed quality
 - Skill of employees

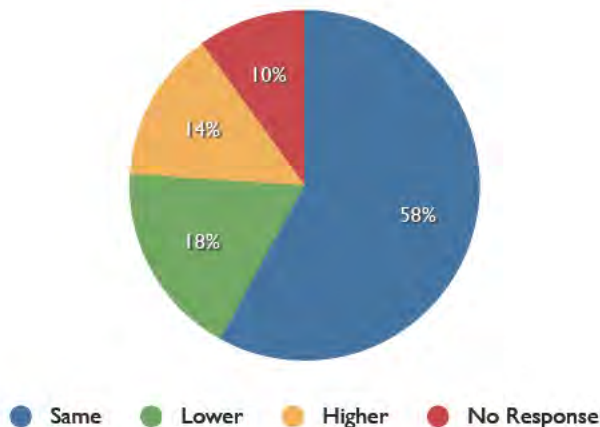


Feed Quality



Source: Hay and Forage Grower, 2002

Feed Cost



Source: Hay and Forage Grower, 2002

First Step - Know your production costs

- Keep good records (time, fuel & lubrication, repair & maintenance)

Work with a financial planner

Available resources:

- **Your county agriculture agent:**

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/>

UWEX machinery cost publication:

<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/pdf/A3510.pdf>

UWM spreadsheet:

<http://www.apec.umn.edu/faculty/wlazarus/tools.html>

UWM financial database:

<http://www.finbin.umn.edu/>

Getting started with a custom harvester

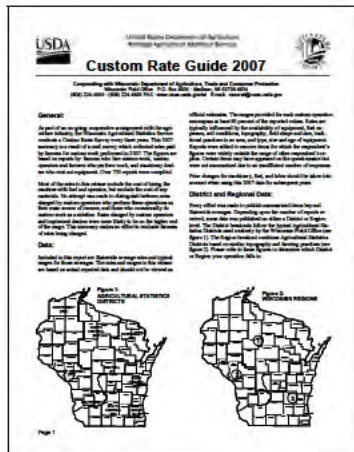
USDA-NASS Custom Rate Guide:

- Average rates and ranges

Rate data organized by:

- 9 districts
- 3 regions

Good starting point -
not official estimates



Getting started with a custom harvester

Getting to know a custom harvester:

- Ask for references
 - Be prepared to give references
 - Share cropping plans, field layouts (obstructions)



Maintain a mutually beneficial partnership

Building a relationship with a custom harvester:

- Have written contact

Stick with your harvester

- Knows fields
- Season scheduling

Pay on-time

Communicate

- Crop conditions
- Change in acreage
- Complaints



Maintain a mutually beneficial partnership



Be careful not to be penny-wise and pound-foolish!

- 1 Custom harvesters don't stop for milking
- 2 Packing/bagging capacity must match harvester

Forage Resources

Harvesting and Storage

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Harvesting and Storage

[Silage Harvesting & Equipment](#) | [Silage Storage & Equipment](#) | [Bale Harvesting & Equipment](#) | [Custom Harvesting](#) | [Silage Storage](#) | [Hay and Silage Storage](#) | [Crop Rotation](#) | [Crop and Soil Management](#) | [Soil Science](#) | [Water](#)

Silage Harvesting & Equipment

Forage Harvester Adjustments
by Matt Digman, UW Extension Ag Engineer, Wisconsin Crop Manager, September, 2008

Minimizing Wheel Traffic Damage to Alfalfa
A "Focus on Forage" fact sheet edited by Dan Urdahl, UW Extension Forage Agronomist

Adjusting the Conditioning System on a Mower-Conditioner
by Dr. Ron Schults, UW Extension Ag Engineer

Grain, Weeds and Mower-Conditioners
by Dr. Ron Schults, Wisconsin Crop Manager, May, 2008

Drying Forage for Hay and Haylage
by Dan Urdahl, UW Extension Forage Agronomist, Wisconsin Crop Manager, April, 2008

Adjusting the Forage Harvester for Corn Silage Particle Size
by Dr. Ron Schults, UW Extension Ag Engineer

Rolls and Micros
by Dr. Ron Schults, UW Extension Ag Engineer

Soil Compaction in Alfalfa Fields
A MS PowerPoint presentation by Dr. Ron Schults, UW Extension Ag Engineer

Crop Processor Adjustment for Corn Stalks
by Dr. Ron Schults, UW Extension Ag Engineer

Estimating the Weight of Forage in a Forage Wagon
by Dan Wilmar, Senior Technical Ag Rep, South Soak, A "Focus on Forage" fact sheet

Harvest and Storage of High-Quality Corn Stalks for Dairy Cows **PowerPoint**
by Dr. Ron Schults, UW Extension Ag Engineer

Corn Stalk Harvest Management
by Dr. Ron Schults, UW Extension Ag Engineer, Dr. Jim Lewis, UW Extension Agronomist and Dr. Kevin Stoltman, UW Ag Engineer

Machinery Selection and Adjustments for Minimized Field Losses
by Dr. Ron Schults, UW Extension Ag Engineer

Bale Harvesting & Equipment

How to Bale Storage Losses: how different options stack up
by Cindy Davis, University County Agricultural Agent, A "Focus on Forage" Fact Sheet

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<http://www.uwex.edu/crops/forage/storage.htm>

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For more information visit the Team Forage website:
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/crops/uwforage/uwforage.htm>