

Making hay: Farmers finally get to cut first crop of year

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA COUNTY — With the rains apparently done for a while, Wallowa County farmers are making hay while the sun shines, as they mow their first cutting of alfalfa across the county.

“It looks like we have a really good window toward putting hay up,” said Mark Butterfield, chairman of the Wallowa County Hay Growers. “I don’t think anybody’s complaining about extra moisture. It’s been a blessing both for the stockgrowers and us.”

“It’s finally turned into summer,” said Tyler Coppin, who with his father, Mike, has about 1,000 acres in both timothy grass and alfalfa in the Upper Prairie Creek area. “I just hope the hot weather will last.”

That’s critical to get the mown hay to dry on the ground before baling.

Short crop

Most hay growers agree the cold, wet spring hindered growth of the hay crop.

Tim Melville, who owns and operates Cornerstone Farms Joint Venture with his wife, Audrey, sons Kevin, Kurt and their wives, said their farm has about 300 acres in alfalfa and about 250 in timothy grass in various fields around the county.

“It’s a little bit short and a little bit later than usual,” Tim Melville said. “It’s been colder and it didn’t grow as much as usual.”

But, he said, the slower growth will make for good quality because it won’t be too mature.

Son, Kurt, who is in



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Kerry Searles swaths alfalfa hay on a Cornerstone Farms Joint Venture field just north of Joseph on Wednesday, June 22, 2022. It was the year’s first cutting of the alfalfa crop.

charge of the farm’s hay harvest, got a bit more technical.

He said Wednesday, June 22, the alfalfa is “a little bit lighter than usual because we haven’t had as many

Butterfield said his two types of hay were mixed.

“Alfalfa’s behind and timothy’s is ahead, but everything looks good,” he said.

to predict the price. “It’s a bit of a jinx to predict hay prices,” he said. “It should be as high or better than last year.”

He said he sold his hay

lighter than normal,” he said. “Until we actually get some up, sometimes it’s a bit deceiving, but I think it’ll be about 20% less than usual, but I could be com-

knocking on the door of \$350-\$400 a ton, maybe more.”

He attributes this to the fact that competitors in the Ellensburg, Washington, and Columbia Basin areas had trouble with their crop getting rained on.

“If we can get our hay in, it’ll be premium,” he said.

Premium quality is the highest with the largest nutrient percentage.

Coppin said his farm sells mostly as an export crop to Japan.

“I’m already selling hay from last year for more than last year,” he said.

Production cost

But it’s not all about the quality of the crop. Growers have to contend with the cost of production, as well.

The growers interviewed — to a man — agreed the high cost of petroleum is affecting nearly everything.

“Fuel prices are terrible; oil prices are terrible,” Coppin said.

This not only affects fuel used in farm machinery, but the cost of transporting crops to market. It also boosts the cost of fertilizer and other chemicals heavy in petroleum.

Tim Melville said it also affects the availability and cost of parts for farm machines.

“Some of the parts have doubled in price in past 12 months,” he said. “Fertilizer’s double what it was last year.”

Coppin said the production costs are also seen in the availability of parts.

“Everything’s hard to get,” he said, estimating costs are up 30%. “I don’t know anything’s not hard to get.”

“I’M ALREADY SELLING HAY FROM LAST YEAR FOR MORE THAN LAST YEAR.”

— **Tyler Coppin**, hay grower

heat units, but it looks like a good window to knock it down. The forecast has about 10 days to take that first cutting.”

The timothy grass takes a bit longer, he said, adding that it should be another two or three weeks before it’s ready to cut.

Butterfield has about 1,900 acres east of Joseph evenly split between the two types of hay.

Market price

Most growers are expecting higher prices for their hay once it’s baled.

Butterfield was hesitant

for \$190-\$290 a ton last year on the farm — where the buyer loads and hauls it from the farm.

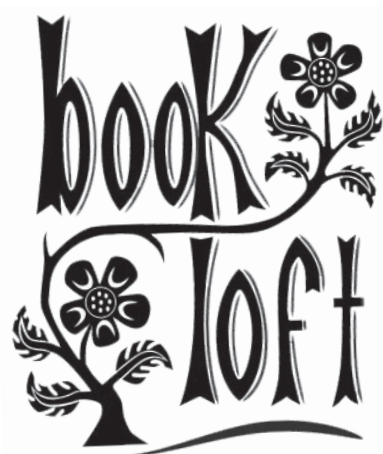
Kurt Melville agreed it will likely be comparable to last year, but he said he hasn’t been keeping close track of the market.

“It’ll be a little bit

pletely wrong until start running balers through fields.”

Tyler Coppin, on the other hand, is quite optimistic as to the price this year.

“I’m thinking this is going to be highest prices we’ll get in anyone’s lifetime,” he said. “It’ll be



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CLUES ACROSS

- Cruel smile
- Makes a pick
- Folk singer Guthrie
- “Parallel Mothers” director Almodovar
- ___ talk (honest conversation)
- Stink
- Elite crew
- Tracy Chapman, vocally
- Bike selection
- AOL rival
- 23andMe competitor
- Persnickety
- “The Little Mermaid” collectible
- Go by, as time
- Four-sided dice, e.g. (Note the last 3 letters of this answer + the start of 34-Down)
- Go by, as time
- “Jane ___”
- Shofar horn source
- “Semper Fidelis” composer
- Prop for a ball
- Haim of “Licorice Pizza”
- Fish kissed in Newfoundland
- Conceited
- Farmers market sights
- Advice lead-in
- Acts lovey-dovey
- Reddit Q&A
- Work space
- “... but no less” (Last 4 letters + the end of 53-Down)
- Woman in Progressive ads
- Word before “a blank” or “the line”
- Steamy resorts
- One may be forwarded
- Vibe
- Grin’s “ends”
- Smoothed, as a sand trap
- Gym shorts material
- ___ mater
- Has to have

CLUES DOWN

- Inbox annoyance

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14						15					16			
17						18					19			
20				21	22						23			
			24							25				
26	27	28			29		30	31			32	33	34	
35				36			37				38			
39						40				41	42			
43				44	45					46				
47			48					49			50			
				51					52		53			
54	55	56				57	58				59	60	61	
62						63				64	65			
66						67				68				
69						70				71				

- Clears after taxes
- Starter home?
- Part of BCE
- Like Mercury or Venus (First 4 letters + the start of 21-Across)
- Prophet
- One-named soccer legend
- Pieces of body art, for short
- Toy racer
- It has many diamonds
- Saxophone accessory
- Like low-fat meat
- Its pods go into gumbo
- Comedian Bargatze
- Microwave, as leftovers
- Egyptian snakes
- “Home Alone” co-star Joe (Last 3 letters + the start of 47-Across)
- Standoffish
- ___ Arabia
- Itty-bitty
- Bread that might be marbled
- Cleaning product that anagrams to 33-Down
- Total stranger, informally
- Build up
- “Help!”
- Black ___ (dress code)
- Deficiency
- Shrunken Asian lake
- Takes legal action
- “Sad trombone” sound
- Texan city supposedly named after a Ukrainian city
- Not lenient
- Spare rib supplier?
- 50-50 test guess
- Does some paving
- Australian gem
- Toasty
- Like fair-weather friends
- Twisted the truth
- 12-year-___ (some tweens)
- Hollywood Legend West

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SUNDAY WORSHIP
at 9am
Pastor John B. King Jr
phone (message): 541-426-4633
web: gracelutheranenterprise.com

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