

# Hay:

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“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.”

Butterfield has about 1,900 acres east of Joseph evenly split between the two types of hay. Because of the late spring, Butterfield is hoping fall gets a late start as well.

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

He began cutting the alfalfa on June 23, already several days behind the pace from a year ago. He will move to the timothy after completing alfalfa. Butterfield is expecting a strong season for the timothy, and the alfalfa crop could be bountiful too if the heat picks up.

Most hay growers agree the cold, wet spring hindered growth of the hay crop, and it can be a delicate balancing act that



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

**Seth Parker swaths a field of Mark Butterfield’s alfalfa hay Thursday, June 23, 2022, in a field along Dobbin Road south of Enterprise. The first hay cutting of the year happened later than usual due to a cool, damp spring.**

the weather presents by keeping them out of their fields longer.

“They are trying to do two different

things with higher production and higher quality,” Nash said. “If they miss that quality point that breaks between dairy qual-

ity and feeder hay, it can be as much as \$100 a ton. It is hard to make that up with volume.”

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

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

Tyler Coppin, who farms 1,000 acres with his father in both timothy grass and alfalfa in the Upper Prairie Creek area, is quite optimistic about hay prices this year.

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

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