Abnormally dry season reduces hay production, raises prices

More than half of the country has experienced a decrease in hay production this year.

KOMU 8’s Lukas Udstuen (UHD-stin) tells us how drought conditions in the South and an unusually dry year in Missouri has mid-Missouri farmers competing for the reduced stocks of hay.

TS ALPACA EATING HAY, NAT POP: CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH.

It might seem like no work went into preparing this alpaca’s dinner. But some mid-Missouri farmers, like Columbia alpaca farmer Gary Licklider (LICK-lighter), are still searching for hay to feed their animals this winter.

Well, I've probably got about half of what will get me through the winter -- so I probably need at least another 100 bales to get me through the winter. And that's a hope and a prayer that we don't have the snow cover and the hard winter like we had last year.

An abnormally hot and dry summer kept Missouri’s grass from growing, so farmers had to dip into their hay supplies earlier than usual. They also couldn’t cut more hay from the grass, so hay production decreased as well.

This happened to a greater extreme in other states like Texas, which were hit with exceptional drought, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
I think the drought this year and just the demand on other parts of this country, that’s taken a lot of hay from the Midwest and moving it down South.

The low hay production has driven prices up in Missouri this summer. Howard County cattle farmer Jason Rimmel (RYE-mel) says under normal conditions $35 is a fair price for a round bale of hay. Recently, he says they’ve had offers from Texan farmers for as much as $100 per bale.

Someone tell you $100 per bale, they’ll tell you you’re nuts. I still think they’re nuts -- but you need it, you need it.

The Farmer’s Livestock Auction farm in Boonville grows most of its own hay. Rimmel says their hay production was halved this year.

You know, we’ve looked at buying hay -- but that ain’t working because everyone around this area was short.

Although with some hay from mid-Missouri being shipped to Texas, some farmers are still able to find all the hay they need locally. Columbia horse farmer Linda Coats has been able to keep the same supplier this year.

We haven’t had to go out looking for hay because we do buy it all from this one source. But people have called us looking for hay, and we haven’t really had any extra hay to sell.
So far, the impact of the shortage has not affected the prices of consumer goods. Lukas Udstuen, KOMU 8 news, Columbia

(ANCHOR TAG)

To learn more about the types of hay used in Missouri, go to KOMU.com.