

oat hay planner

chapter 2

credit Emma Leonard, AgriKnowHow

Top tips for new oat hay growers

Understand the market

Research demand for different types of hay and bale conformations.

Talk to hay buyers, other producers and source information from industry bodies including AEXCO and the Australian Fodder Industry Association (AFIA).

Understand the quality criteria and how these are influenced by agronomy and management.

Know what the market will reject.

Calculate the gross margin for oat hay

Compare gross margin with other enterprises.

Investigate the use and availability of contractors.

Select the right variety

Base variety selection on average rainfall, growing conditions and disease issues in your paddocks and regions.

Test for soil borne diseases such as cereal cyst nematode and stem nematode as their presence can strongly influence variety choice.

Attention to agronomy

Understand the influence of available nitrogen (N) on hay quality.

Ensure good pre-seeding weed control and low levels of N can be achieved in any paddocks selected for oat hay.

Plan ahead for hay making

Assess risks associated with rain damage at curing. The following factors help reduce the risk of rain damage:

- correct variety maturity;
- a spread of variety maturity;
- adequate equipment; and
- super-conditioning.

If purchasing equipment order well ahead to ensure late arrival does not delay cutting and baling.

More details on all of these issues are provided in the following chapters.

The oat hay year planner

Between crops

November / December

- Discuss future demand and preferred varieties with hay buyers
- Preliminary paddock selection
- Order new seed
- Speak with contractors

January / March

- Soil test for nutrients and root disease
- Produce a fertiliser budget
- Manage stubble
- Speak to hay buyers about pre-season contract
- Implement repairs and maintenance to storage and equipment

March / April

- Finalise paddock plans
- Prepare equipment for sowing
- Allow volunteer cereals and weeds to germinate before applying herbicide

April / June

- Calculate 1000 grain weight and seeding rates
- Sow early into clean, weed free paddocks
- Ideally sow before mid June
- Confirm hay making, storage and transport contracts



In-crop

Manage crops by growth stage - [see page 13](#)

Hay making

September / November

- Cut and condition/super condition hay
- Monitor moisture levels in windrows
- Bale when optimum moisture is reached
- Cart hay to storage immediately after baling
- Develop a list of machinery repairs and maintenance
- Clean and store machinery



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