



Get to Know Oxbow Hay

Why is there variability with Oxbow hay?

Sun, wind, humidity, field location, maturity at harvest, and storage conditions all play a vital role in determining the physical and nutritional attributes of hay. An optimal balance of all these conditions is necessary to achieve a quality hay product.

John Miller, the owner and founder of Oxbow Pet Products, hand-selects the hay himself. John has won many awards and is considered an expert in the field of hay science. Oxbow's Quality Control Team inspects every load of hay packaged under the Oxbow name.

Several factors are graded:

- **Packaging**
- **Color**
- **Texture**
- **Stem-to-leaf ratio**
- **Brown leaf percentage**
- **Stem percentage**
- **Seed head percentage**
- **Smell**
- **Dust level**

No hay that scores under 85 percent is accepted; Oxbow hay rarely scores under 90 percent.

Because Oxbow's hay comes from a number of fields in a wide region of North America, there will easily be variability from bag to bag. **Some of the most common variations are color, size, and texture.**

• **Color Variation**

When a hay cluster grows, it grows up. After it has been cut once, instead of growing up, the cluster grows out, or "stools." This cluster "stool" typically has more brown leaves because more of the leaves don't reach the sunlight – this is a natural result of the weather and the growing season. Even though there may be color variation with Oxbow hay, the fibre level remains consistent.

• **Size Variation**

Hay can have longer, stem-like pieces or shorter, grass-like pieces. The shorter, grass-like pieces are typically characteristic of the hay cluster stool. It is important for a small herbivore to eat both stems and leaves. Oxbow constantly strives to provide an optimal balance of both.

• **Texture Variation**

Sometimes hay feels soft; sometimes it feels crunchy. This variance occurs with changes in growing and harvesting conditions. Sun, wind, and humidity play a vital role in controlling this variance. Oxbow's hay growers understand the specific needs of small herbivores and harvest the hay when these conditions are most favorable.

What if my pet won't eat it?

Hay is fed purely for fibre and is vital for the health of a small herbivore. When you sense resistance to eat hay, try these suggestions that have worked for other pet owners like yourself:

- **First, do not remove uneaten hay, unless it is soiled** – just add to it. Removing it encourages selective eating. Crop variations can be an acquired taste, but one that pets can grow to enjoy.
- **Also, offer a variety of grass hays to eat.** All Oxbow grass hays are nutritionally similar and are readily interchangeable. Choose from Oxbow's Orchard Grass, Oat Hay, and Brome Hay, and change the variety offered periodically. Feeding a variety will ensure hay consumption continues when crops vary from time to time.
- **Then, try other tips to enhance the hay presentation:**
 - Try misting the hay with fruit juice.
 - Put the hay in a box or hay feeder, and add any normal treats to it for enrichment (for example, shred a small bit of carrot on top of the hay).
 - Sprinkle spices such as oregano, thyme, and basil on the hay.