

Spring shrinks hay crop

Cold, dry season reduces harvest

By Harvey Auster
Poughkeepsie Journal

Red Hook dairy farmer Irving Fraleigh has been trying to cut hay this past week to feed his cattle. But the cold, dry spring has cut his crop back to between a third and half of what it should be.

"Where we usually get 500 bales, right now we're only getting maybe 200. That's not even half a crop," complained the 76-year-old dairyman.

The dry and cold spring "has really im-

pacted the first cutting of hay," explained David Tetor, dairy agent with Cornell Cooperative Extension in Dutchess County.

"Right now, it looks like maybe there will be half a crop."

Dairy farmers rely on several cuttings of hay to feed their cows. After a spring drought that left the region with less than half the normal rainfall due in May, farmers are worried that they may face the burden of buying replacement feed. For many, the additional costs can push an already marginal business operation into the red.

Buying a ton of hay will cost a farmer about \$80, said Jim Utter of Utter Brothers Hay & Feed Store in Pawling. One cow can

eat a ton of hay per month, he said.

With the average dairy farm here running 100 to 125 cows, the costs can mount quickly if the farmers have to buy feed instead of growing it.

In Millerton, Harry and Julie Schroeder's dairy farm has about 80 cows. They are nervously watching the weather.

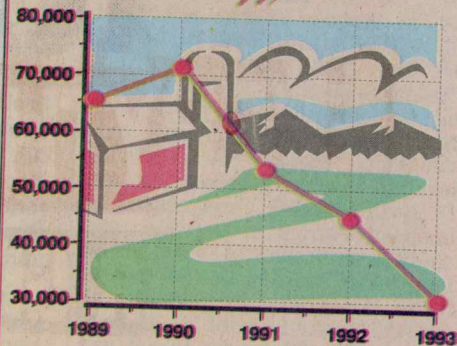
"We normally start the first cut around Memorial Day," explained Harry Schroeder, a former chairman of the Dutchess County Legislature. But letting it grow a little longer may make up, in a small way, for the cold and dry weather.

"With the weather threatening and supposedly unstable up through Monday," he said, "we don't want to gamble an already

Please see **Hay**, 5B

Dwindling hay harvest

A dry spring has severely reduced the spring hay harvest in Dutchess County, which has declined for years.



Source: Cornell Cooperative Extension, N.Y. State Department of Agriculture.

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