



ALL ABOUT OXBOW HAY QUALITY

For over 25 years, Oxbow has specialized in producing premium hay that meets the specific needs and preferences of small herbivores. Our hay production is guided by 5 generations of family hay growing expertise, and all Oxbow hay undergoes an extensive quality journey – from the time fields are planted, to the moment when the hay is fed to pets. This guide offers a closer look at Oxbow’s extensive quality process, highlighting what makes Oxbow hay so special.

Oxbow’s Family of Farms

All Oxbow hay is grown on our family of farms by longtime partners who are experts in the production of premium hay. All Oxbow farms are located in the United States in climates ideally suited for producing hay that meets the strictest quality attributes. Working one-on-one, we specially train all growers on the production of Oxbow hay.

Get to Know Our Growers

- Longtime members of the Oxbow Family
- Farms located in ideal climates for premium hay production
- Follow strict quality specifications developed by Oxbow
- Cut & harvest hay early in growth cycle to ensure premium attributes
- Exceptional stewards of the environment and the land
- Store hay properly to limit exposure to weather and pests

Quality Specifications

All Oxbow hay growers strictly follow specifications that guide growing practices and quality attributes of Oxbow hay. These specifications serve as the road map for producing hay that meets and exceeds the expectations of even the toughest critics – the small pets that eat Oxbow hay each day.

Did You Know

Oxbow’s Grower Education Program includes dedicated hay grower training events at Oxbow. At these trainings, Oxbow hay growers come to Oxbow to learn about our quality standards, industry leading processes, and passionate customers. Most importantly, these events further strengthen our longtime relationships with our family of expert hay growers.

Field Scouting and Inspections

Throughout the growing season, all fields are toured and inspected by Oxbow’s hay experts. Field visits occur at two key stages – pre-harvest and harvest.

Field Scouting (Pre-harvest)

Fields are inspected for crop quality, weed presence, and other quality factors. At this time, Oxbow’s Hay Specialist reviews specs with growers to ensure preparation for harvest.

Harvest Scouting & Inspection

At the time of harvest, fields are visited and samples are taken to ensure all quality attributes are met. Every individual hay crop is inspected for quality prior to purchase.

Oxbow’s Dedicated Hay Specialist

Our Hay Specialist is dedicated to guiding the production and sourcing of the most premium hay available on the market. This key member of Oxbow’s team maintains relationships with all Oxbow hay growers and ensures that all hay quality specifications are met.

Which Cutting of Hay is Best for My Pet?

A hay “cutting” refers to the number of crop harvested from a particular field. “First cutting” references the initial crop from a field, with a sequential cutting or cuttings often following later in the season. Many pet parents have perceptions about the different attributes of hay cuttings. A more important and reliable quality indicator is harvest timing as it relates to the development of the plant. All Oxbow hay is purposefully harvested at a young stage of the plant’s growth, whether it’s during a first or later cutting. Cutting hay early in its development allows Oxbow to consistently harvest hay with premium characteristics, including higher nutritional value, better color, and ideal product softness.



The Oxbow Quality Process Transport, Processing, and Packaging

Protecting Precious Cargo - Oxbow Hay Transportation & Storage



All Oxbow hay is shipped in covered containers to prevent exposure to sunlight and precipitation. At Oxbow, all hay is stored in our fully-enclosed, climate controlled hay warehouse. Storing hay in this controlled environment allows us to preserve product quality indefinitely.

Oxbow Hay Processing – A Closer Look

At Oxbow, all hay undergoes an extensive quality journey from the time its delivered to when its carefully placed in a package. Key steps in our multi-faceted quality process include:



Hand Inspection and Sampling

At the time of receiving (and prior to unloading), hay is assessed for color, texture, and aroma attributes. Next, a sample is analyzed in our product quality laboratory for key nutritional and quality attributes.



Tracking Oxbow Hay (Lot Number Assignment)

Hay that passes these important initial tests is received and assigned a lot number for tracking purposes. This key traceability step carries through to the package and beyond, ensuring product quality and safety at every step.



Hay Handling and Sorting

For more than 25 years, Oxbow has led the industry in expertly handling and processing hay. Utilizing our premium, proprietary process, Oxbow hay is gently taken out of the bale, de-dusted, and separated of naturally-occurring foreign materials. A dedicated team of Oxbow experts further hand-sorts the hay to remove any less premium portions of hay to prepare it for packaging.



Packaging

Sorted hay is delivered to the production floor where team members further evaluate hay for quality prior to packaging. Oxbow hay is then carefully packaged using custom designed equipment. Next, all packaged hay undergoes metal detection prior to being boxed and transported to our climate controlled warehouse where it awaits shipment.



Did You Know

Did you know that all Oxbow Hay Team members engage in specialized training to equip them with the knowledge required to become hay quality experts? To take their expertise to the next level, team members are encouraged to enroll in highly-specialized Certified Operator training. Oxbow Certified Operators are recognized leaders within their area of expertise and provide valuable guidance and leadership to the team as a whole.

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