

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension will offer nitrate testing of cattle forages at Husker Harvest Days in Grand Island Sept. 10-11.

The free rapid testing will be available at the university's building during the event.

"If you are concerned that drought has damaged crops or other forages and want to know if the nitrate level is too high to feed, UNL extension can address these concerns," said Matt Luebbe, assistant professor of animal science.

To have forage tested, producers collect a representative sample of the feedstuff(s) they are concerned with and drop off samples. Producers should choose samples that represent the greatest risk level, Luebbe said. The samples can be tested while producers enjoy other exhibits.

"With the rapid test, we can usually determine if high nitrate levels exist within 1-2 minutes. After that we can quantify the amount of nitrates within an hour if the preliminary test is positive," he said. "If we determine your feedstuffs are high in nitrates, there will be UNL beef extension personnel available to help you to tailor a feeding program that fits your needs and resources available."

Luebbe added that he does not think many forages will have elevated nitrate levels because the stressors this year are not as widespread as they were in 2012.

Although the tests are not as comprehensive as those done by commercial labs, Luebbe said, results will help feeders decide how to feed these forages, or if additional commercial tests are necessary.