

Mixed Grass Hay Field

This field represents a typical mixed grass hay field that can be found throughout Wisconsin. Most of these hay fields were created from grasses that are native to Europe and were brought along by the original settlers. This field has a very diverse mix of grass, including timothy, bromegrass, quackgrass, bluegrass, orchardgrass, fescue, and redtop. These grasses are all well adapted to Wisconsin climates and provide nutritional and healthy feed for livestock. Timothy (*Phleum pratense*) and smooth bromegrass (*Bromus inermis*) are the two most dominant grasses in this field.



Timothy
Credit: Michael Casler



Smooth bromegrass
Credit: Michael Casler

Grass hay is used to feed livestock. Most grass hay fields contain some clover and perhaps some alfalfa. These are legumes that convert nitrogen from the air into a nutrient that improves soil quality and feeds the grasses. These legumes can also increase the feeding value of the hay crop, providing more nutritional value for livestock. Grass hay is usually harvested several times per year, cut and laid into windrows for drying. When dry enough, the windrows are baled. These fields can also be grazed by livestock.



Tractor and baler with dried windrows in the front right.



Cattle grazing grass pasture in southwestern Wisconsin.
Photo Credit: Eric Cates