

MFGA Green Gold Report – June 4, 2018 – WESTERN / CENTRAL

Hay Day is June 6th in the Western area of the province. Central isn't that far behind. Although the report isn't complete and I will update once I get the lab results. I felt that it is important to get this information out asap.

SITE	RFV NIR	RFV PEAQ	Height	CP
Portage	195	244	15	34
Winkler		207	17	
CENTRAL AVERAGE	195	226	16	34
Brandon	182	191	20	23.9
Virden		207	17	
Minnedosa	163	192	21	23.4
Kilarney	165	187	22	27.5
Sifton	201	165	26	28.9
WESTERN AVERAGE	178	188	21	26

Continued good growing conditions throughout the area have advanced the crop quickly. Alfalfa has continued to add close to 1 inch/day of new growth. Most of the Western area saw 1-3 inches of rain last week, while the areas in the Central area where we are sampling saw only ½ inch.

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What I am hearing

Alfalfa is advancing very quickly in most of the West/Central area and is at or getting close to the optimum stage for Dairy quality forage. Reports this morning (**Wednesday**) still has alfalfa growing at a rate of 1 inch/day or more.



1 Alfalfa flowering Winkler

Alfalfa Weevil Update

Monday a.m. in the SE I was able to find some larva feeding on the alfalfa.

Presently we are at 220 GDD (base 9C). A threshold of about 230 will provide the best prediction for the peak of second instar larvae populations which is also the stage at which an economic threshold can be applied.

I haven't had any reports from the West/Central area yet but producers that aren't planning on cutting for another week should be checking their fields.

Cutting Height in Hay Fields: How Low Can You Go?

With haying just getting started it's important to pay attention to cutting height in your hay crop. One of the goals is to maximize yield; however, cutting a hay crop too low can lead to several negative issues. With the introduction of the disk-type mowers (discbines) it has allowed for cutting very close to the ground. Stand longevity can be compromised when the crop is cut too low. As a general rule, alfalfa can be cut closer to the ground than our grass hay crops. We need to think about where energy reserves are stored in the crop. For alfalfa, carbohydrates are stored below ground in the taproot. Grass hay crops store their energy above ground in the stem base or tillers. Frequent mowing at a close height will continue to deplete these energy reserves, resulting in stand longevity issues. The second consequence for mowing too close to the ground is increased ash content of the forage. All forage has a natural ash content of approximately 6%. However, mowing too closely with disk mowers can add soil to the crop, and increase the ash content by as much as 10-12% (18% ash content in total analysis). If we all had table-top smooth fields, it would also be much easier to make a closer cut across all fields. However, things such as groundhog holes and the unevenness of fields can add to increased ash content of our harvested forage.

So how low can you go? The best answer is...it depends! If you have grasses involved, you must keep cutting height higher than a pure stand of legume, if you want to keep the grass in the stand. Keep in mind these are **minimum** recommendations; it's okay to mow higher than the numbers below.

Alfalfa

- 2" minimum. Some literature shows a cutting height of 1" will not reduce stand longevity, but remember the increased ash content issue. Also, keep in mind that frequent cutting at early maturity will continue to deplete carbohydrate reserves. One cutting of alfalfa should be allowed to reach the bloom stage each year.

Cool Season Grasses (Orchardgrass, Timothy)

- 4" during the establishment year
- 3" minimum during production years. This is where we see most of our stand longevity issues. Frequent cutting of cool season grasses at a low height will continue to deplete energy reserves.

Mixed stands

- You must manage for the predominant species. Do you have a grass stand with some alfalfa, or an alfalfa stand with some grass?
- Alfalfa with some grass: 2.5" minimum
- Grass with some alfalfa: 3" minimum (if you want to keep the grass stand!)