

MFGA Green Gold Report – June 11, 2020 – EASTERN

2020 Reports for Optimum Alfalfa Harvest Date cover Eastern, Central and Western Manitoba.

SITE	RFV NIR	RFV PEAQ	Height	CP
St.Pierre E	202	214	17	22
Beausjour		199	21	
Ste.Anne	189	187	22	25
New Bothwell	190	203	19	23
Stony Mountain	165	173	25	24
EASTERN AVERAGE	187	195	21	24

Fields in the East have entered the late bud stage. Haying has started in the Stony Mountain area. Since Monday fields have gained about 3 inches of new growth. Where the alfalfa was damaged by frost it has finally grown out of it yield losses are hard to estimate as the damage was extremely variable across the East.

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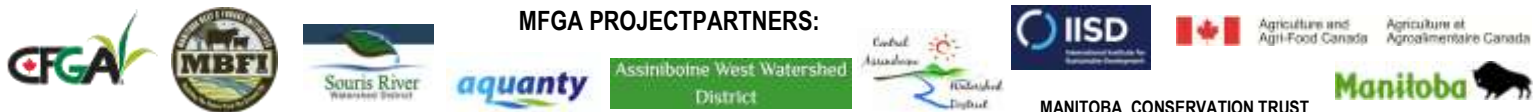
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What I am Seeing

This week we have seen the alfalfa add about 3 inches of new growth and move into the late bud stage. Although some areas of the Eastern area in particularly the SE received excess amounts of rain the areas where fields are being sampled look to have received about 1 inch of rain.

Producers are still checking their fields for Alfalfa weevil damage.

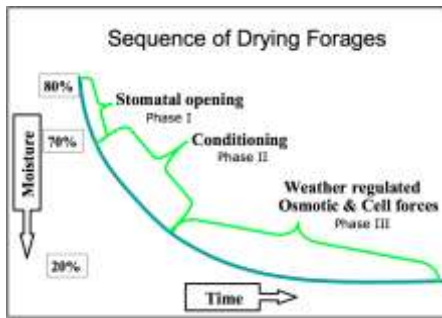
I am getting reports of hay fields being harvested in the Stony Mountain area.



How does forage dry?

If we understand and use the biology and physics of forage drying properly, not only does the hay dry faster and have less chance of being rained on, but the total digestible nutrients (TDN) of the harvested forage are higher.

The general pattern of drying forages is shown in the figure at right. When forage is cut, it has 75 to 80 percent moisture, which must be dried down to 60 to 65% moisture content for haylage and down to 14 to 18% moisture content for hay (lower figures for larger bales).



The **first phase of drying** is moisture loss from the leaves through the stomates. Stomates are the openings in the leaf surface that allow moisture loss to the air to cool the plant and carbon dioxide uptake from the air as the plant is growing. Stomates open in daylight and close when in dark. Cut forage laid in a wide swath maximizes the amount of forage exposed to sunlight, keeping the stomates open and encouraging rapid drying which is crucial

immediately after cutting. Plant respiration continues after the plant is cut and gradually declines until plant moisture content has fallen below 60%. Therefore, rapid initial drying to lose the first 15% moisture will reduce loss of starches and sugars and preserve more dry matter and total digestible nutrients in the harvested forage. This initial moisture loss is not affected by conditioning.

The **second phase of drying** (II) is moisture loss from both the leaf surface (stomates have closed) and from the stem. At this stage conditioning can help increase drying rate. Conditioning to break stems every two inches allows more opportunities for water loss since little water loss will occur through the waxy cuticle of the stem.

The **final phase of drying** (III) is the loss of more tightly held water, particularly from the stems. Conditioning is critical to enhance drying during this phase.

Should I let the alfalfa blossom at least once during the summer?

If your goal is to keep the alfalfa in rotation as long as possible, then the plants should have the opportunity to reach one-tenth blossom at least once during the growing season. This is the point when the plants reach a full level of carbohydrate reserves in the roots.

Many times if the alfalfa stand has been damaged during winter and it has been slow to respond to warm weather, it is a good idea to let the plants build their root carbohydrate levels and reach one-tenth blossom at least once during the growing season. The best cutting to do this would be either second or third rather than first cutting when we have the highest yield.