

MFGA Green Gold Report – June 8, 2020 – WESTERN / CENTRAL

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

SITE	RFV NIR	RFV PEAQ	Height	CP
Elm Creek	143	184	24	22
Austin				
Gladstone				
PLP Southport	136	161	28	20
PLP South		174	26	
Newton	144	187	22	20
CENTRAL AVERAGE	141	177	25	21
Miniota N	177	193	22	23
Dauphin	194	188	23	26
Hartney	158	204	20	22
Fork River	188	230	17	24
Sifton	203	193	22	26
Souris	175	187	22	24
Brookdale/MBFI	182			21
WESTERN AVERAGE	182	199	21	24

Although this report is for Monday the 8th of June, there are reports of harvest starting Wednesday the 10th.

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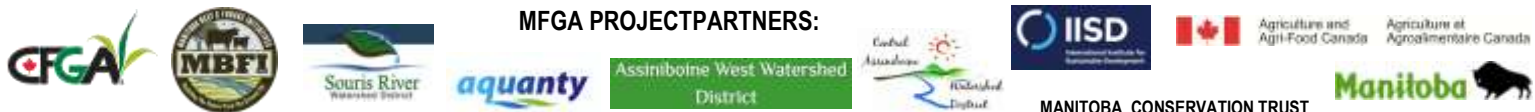
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What I'm hearing

Most of the fields are in the early to late bud stage. As of Wednesday some fields in the West/Central are being cut. Central area seems to be a bit ahead with the alfalfa about 4 inches ahead of the West. This keeps the West on track to hit 170 RFV around June 10th where as the Central is already there in the fields reported.



1Field Elm Creek with Green Gold sampling plot in foreground. Jean Born June 10, 2020

Alfalfa Flowering



Once alfalfa starts to flower it usually indicates that it is time to cut your hay no matter what type of livestock you are feeding. Alfalfa beyond full bloom doesn't generally increase your tonnage of harvested material and as it matures it loses lower leaves rapidly decreasing its feed value.

Normally fields that are cut in early June, with rains and warm weather start to initiate new growth at the crown. What you should be planning for is that in 28-35 days you should be looking at taking your second cut. With haying in this area starting around the 8th to 10th of June you might expect second cut to start around July 22nd.

This will enable you to look at 3 cuts before the critical fall period and a 4th cut sometime in late September early October.

A Steep Decline

Nutritionists like to target hay in the 135-150 RFV towards Dairy cows in the 1st trimester and towards dairy calves. The RFV hay from 125-140 is fed to the dairy cows in the last 200 days and heifers 12-18 months of age. Hay at 115-130 makes excellent Beef cow and heifer 12-18 month old feed and any from 100-115 is good for the Dry cow and heifer between 18 and 24 month.

Though first-cutting offers the opportunity for harvesting the highest digestible fiber of the growing season, forage quality declines at a faster rate for first-cut compared to subsequent cuttings. This presents the possibility of also harvesting large quantities of very poor, low digestible forage once flowering stages are reached.

Hence, a timely first-cut is essential if high forage quality is the primary objective. To achieve a target forage quality, the spring harvest window is often narrower compared to subsequent growth cycles. This downhill ride in declining forage quality is accelerated by warm temperatures. It also becomes more dramatic if grass is present in the stand.

First-cut timing sets the pace for the rest of the growing season. In other words, the first-cut harvest date may dictate how many future cuttings will be taken, the interval between those cuttings, and/or how late into the fall the last cutting will be harvested. First-cutting is the only one of the year when there is no number of days since the previous harvest. The decision options are wide open, but the consequences of the decision impact the rest of the season. Forage quality and yield considerations aside, an earlier initial harvest date often provides for a better utilization of available soil moisture for the second-cutting and expands harvest options for the remainder of the season. An early-cut decision may also be more detrimental to a stand that was stressed the previous year or during the winter.