# MFGA Green Gold Report – May 27, 2021 – WESTERN

**Reports for Optimum Alfalfa Harvest Date cover Manitoba's Central, Western, Eastern and Interlake areas.**

| SITE | RFV NIR | RFV PEAQ | Height | CP |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Belleview | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Forrest-Brookdale Station - MBFI | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Forrest | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Grandview | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Oak River | 224 | 287 | 10 | 31 |
| Miniota | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Reston | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Roseland | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Souris | 261 | 287 | 10 | 33 |
| **WESTERN AVERAGE** | **243** | **287** | **10** | **32** |

Fields in the western section have been slow this cool/slow spring due to the lack of moisture from rain and snow cover from a mild winter. Growth is slow to start. Rain in the past month has been reported of 6/10th to 2 3/10 inch. Light impact from the late frost.

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**Optimizing Your First Cutting of Alfalfa**

Being aggressive on the first cutting is critical if high forage quality is needed. Alfalfa's forage quality changes faster during the first spring growth than at any other time of the year. Plants are maturing and temperatures are increasing, both of which cause quality to decline. If high quality hay is you goal, don't delay harvest. However, if you're raising hay to feed to beef cows, it may be a little different story, especially if you need to rebuild hay supplies. Normally we get our highest total yield by waiting until alfalfa is near full bloom. Not only is yield highest at the point, but it also allows the alfalfa to use available soil moisture most efficiently for growth. Some dryland fields may need quite a bit more rain for good summer and fall harvests since many deep subsoils remain dry, but with a good first cut you at least will have some hay of good enough quality to feed your beef cows next winter. Timing of hay harvest is important whether your needs are for high quality or for high yield. With alfalfa becoming ready to cut soon this spring, don't miss your best time.

**What is Relative Feed Value?**

Over the years we often get the question about RFV. Relative Feed Value is an excellent measure of alfalfa quality because it reflects the digestibility (% ADF) and the intake potential (% NDF) of alfalfa. The guideline was 20-30-40. That was based on forage testing 30% ADF (acid detergent fiber) and 40% NDF (neutral detergent fiber) would be 150 RFV with 20% crude protein. Producers use it when buying alfalfa and on the alfalfa they grow to determine quality. Obviously the more mature the alfalfa at harvest the higher the percent ADF and NDF (lower Relative Feed Value). However, rain damaged hay will also be higher in ADF and NDF because the soluble sugars and carbohydrates can be leached out. Rain damaged hay is also less palatable. Notice that Relative Feed Value does not include the protein percent of the alfalfa!! Astute dairy producers who purchase alfalfa not only utilize the chemical analysis and relative feed value, they also buy small quantities and feed some of it free choice to see if the cows readily consume it before purchasing larger quantities.

Although the Green Gold program targets a RFV of 150 as the optimum time to cut alfalfa, many producers want higher quality hay for their livestock or the hay market. Through MFGA's program you can follow the decline in RFV and time your harvest based on the quality of hay you are targeting.