



MFGA Green Gold Report – June 15, 2022 – WESTERN

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

| SITE | RFV NIR | RFV PEAQ | Height | CP |
|------------------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Cartwright | 159 | - | - | 24 |
| Inglis | - | - | - | - |
| Laurier | 169 | 170 | 27 | 26 |
| McCreary | 167 | 179 | 25 | 26 |
| Miniota | - | - | - | - |
| Oak River | 208 | 179 | 25 | 27 |
| Ochre River | 169 | - | - | 26 |
| Souris | 209 | 166 | 28 | 31 |
| WESTERN AVERAGE | 180 | 135 | 26 | 26 |

On the fields that received heavy amounts of rain, the bottom leaves are starting to rot and become yellow. The RFV gained 18 points over 48 hours. The optimum cutting date is June 20. I would like to thank Jeremy Dueck, Jacques Saquet, Luke Muir, Gerry Gourley, Keith DeVries, and Jean Borne for this year’s contributions.

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What is Hay Day?

Hay Day is the estimated day that alfalfa will reach a Relative Feed Value (RFV) of 170. Past experience has shown that approximately 20 points are lost during the haying process and the time taken to get the entire crop cut, cured and baled. Silage shortens this process and therefore the quality can be higher. Grass/alfalfa mixes can and do reduce the RFV by 20-30 points depending on the % of the blend. Nutritionists like to target hay in the 135-150 RFV towards Dairy cows in the 1st trimester and towards dairy calves. The hay at 125-140 RFV is fed to the dairy cows in the last 200 days and heifers 12-18 months of age. Hay at 115-130 RFV makes excellent feed for beef cows and for heifers 12-18 months old while hay at 100-115 RFV is good for the dry cows and heifers between 18 and 24 months.

Rained-On Hay

Rained-on hay causes many problems. It lowers the hay's feed value and, if baled or stacked too wet, can cause mold or heat damage. A bigger problem, though, can be the long-term damage to regrowing plants. Driving over the field repeatedly, trying to turn hay to hasten drying will injure regrowth and can cause soil compaction, especially if the ground is wet and soft. However, not driving on the field may result in an even bigger problem with the windrows. If they lay there too long, the plants underneath will be smothered. This not only lowers yield, it creates a terrible weed problem as grasses and broadleaves infest the killed strips. These weeds will contaminate all future cuttings. In addition, if rained-on hay windrows are left in the field until next cutting, they frequently will plug the mower, slow harvest, and provide lesser quality hay.

The best option is to remove wet hay any way you can. Bale it, chop it, and even blow it back on the ground as mulch. You may need to damage plants by driving on them to turn hay to speed drying and get sunlight to plants underneath. This may contribute to a short-term loss of young plants, but will prevent wet windrows from ruining the rest of your haying year.

While there's no immediate payback to managing severely rained-on hay, ignoring it will be even more costly in the long run.

Conclusion

With MFGA winding down its 2022 Green Gold Program, I would ask that you provide some feedback as to how useful the program was for you and your operation this year.

As you do your first cut, I would also really appreciate hearing how the first cut fared as to yield and quality. Please email me with your comments at terra@mfga.net.

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