

**MFGA Green Gold Report – May 31, 2023 – CENTRAL REGION**

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

SITE	RFV NIR	RFV PEAQ	Height	CP
Bagot	165	178	24	23
Bruxelles	-	-	-	-
Bruxelles	-	-	-	-
Kalieda	151	181	24	20
MacGregor	173	187	22	23
St.Claude	-	-	-	-
Treherne	170	187	22	26
<b>CENTRAL AVERAGE</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>

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### What we are seeing:

- The plants have begun the late bud, early flower stage.
- The increased warm weather steadily decreased the RFV NIR.
- Increasing growth is due to the recent warm weather.
- There is insect activity on the top leaves of the plant.

### 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 months.

Though the 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 until 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.

### 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](mailto:terra@mfga.net).

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