

MFGA Green Gold Report – May 31, 2023 – WESTERN REGION

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

SITE	RFV NIR	RFV PEAQ	Height	CP
Foxwarren	156	178	24	21
Laurier	165	178	24	22
McCreary	176	182	23	24
Miniota	-	-	-	-
Ninette	175	197	20	24
Oak Burn	-	-	-	-
Oak Lake	-	-	-	-
Oak River	180	216	18	23
Rosburn	227	266	11	28
Souris	160	173	25	24
Ste. Rose	165	197	20	25
WESTERN AVERAGE	175	198	20	23

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What we are seeing:

- Early to mid-bud in most regions.
- Moisture is needed in areas that haven't received any in recent weeks.
- The RFV NIR has steady decreased in the last 2 days due to the heat.
- There have been reports of insect activity on the top leaves of plants.

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.

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