

MFGA Green Gold Report – May 25, 2020 – EASTERN

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

SITE	RFV NIR	RFV PEAQ	Height	CP
St.Pierre E	288	287	11	28
Beausjour	253	277	10	29
Ste.Anne	262	268	12	30
New Bothwell	253	277	10	28
Stony Mountain				
EASTERN AVERAGE	264	277	11	29

Some fields in the South-east are showing signs of winter kill this spring. A number of intended fields have been pulled due to the alfalfa portion having not survived the winter and have had to be worked down. The actual cause is hard to determine as the winter wasn't extremely cold but it may have more to do with how fields entered the winter as there was active growth late into the fall and these fields may not have developed adequate winter hardiness.

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CONTACT: John McGregor, MFGA Green Gold Coordinator, e: john@mfga.net, t: [@mbforages](https://www.instagram.com/mbforages)



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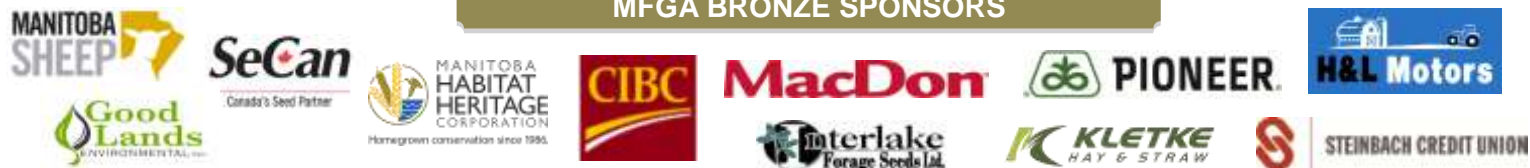
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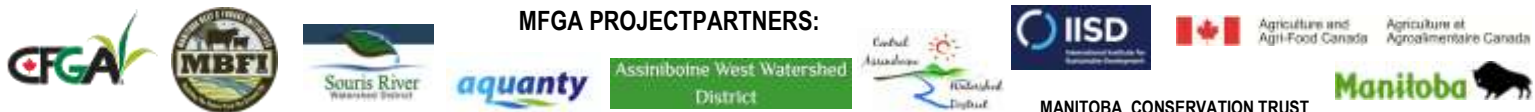
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One question that I have had is **How late are we?**

Granted it has been cool during the month of May except for the past week, and both alfalfa and the grasses are off to a slow start. I went back over the 25 years of data that I have collected working on the Green Gold program and in the SE the average date that the alfalfa is 10-12 inches tall is May 25th. The range is May 11th to June 1st.

Sampling Monday we are averaging 11" so I would say that we are close to normal. If "normal" continues we are likely looking at June 7th to 11th as when alfalfa could be at a RFV of 150.

Alfalfa and Frost

Looking at the long range forecast AccuWeather's long range forecast has temperatures dropping into the 2 to 0 C range Friday May 29th. If we see this happen there is a good chance that we will experience frost in low lying areas.



Alfalfa is relatively tolerant of cold temperatures, especially smaller plants. Most stands should recover just fine with no more than a few frosted leaves. Alfalfa exposed to a light frost (-1 to -2 C) may look wilted for a few hours. Alfalfa plants experiencing this light frost often show frost damage on one to several sets of trifoliate leaves that were exposed at the top of the canopy. This may set the crop back a little but it should grow out of the damage.

If temperatures get down to around -2.8 C or lower, you can expect leaves to freeze, but will likely not kill the apical meristem (bud) at the top of the plant. The meristem has added protection from the developing leaves surrounding the meristem that provides additional insulation. When temperatures warm up, the surviving meristems should continue normal growth.



If the temperatures drop to -3.8 to -4.4, you can expect serious damage, not only to the leaves but to the buds and growing points.

Gauging damage due to frost can be very difficult: if temperatures were around -4 C for an extended period of time, damage could be serious, but if the period of time for which the temperature was at -4 C was fairly short, damage could be minimal.

Newly-seeded alfalfa has excellent cold tolerance, especially before emergence of the second trifoliate. Cold tolerance diminishes some with older seedlings, but newly seeded stands should survive as long as temperatures do not go below -3C for more than four hours.

Patience is key to managing frosted alfalfa