

## MFGA Green Gold Report – May 27, 2020 – WESTERN / CENTRAL

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

SITE	RFV NIR	RFV PEAQ	Height	CP
Elm Creek	238	252	14	29
Austin	220	211	20	33
Gladstone	253	237	16	36
PLP Southport	182	237	16	32
PLP South	222	252	14	32
Newton	245	268	12	37
<b>CENTRAL AVERAGE</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>33</b>
Miniota N	262	252	14	31
Dauphin				
Hartney				
Fork River	292	277	11	37
Sifton	276	244	15	33
Souris	192	237	16	24
Brookdale/MBFI		286	10	
<b>WESTERN AVERAGE</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>31</b>

Weather station through-out the area indicate that the Western area may have escaped to frost whereas the Central came very close and there maybe areas that had light frost damage to the alfalfa.

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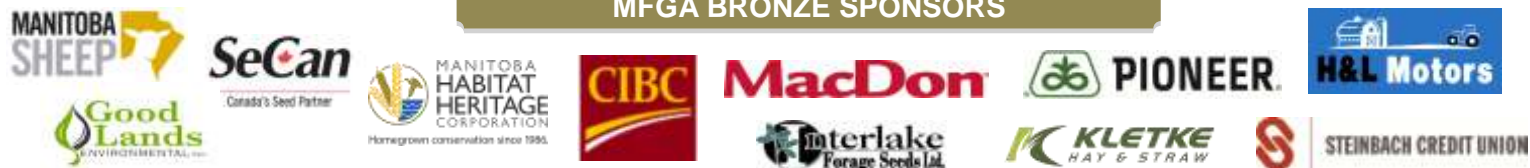
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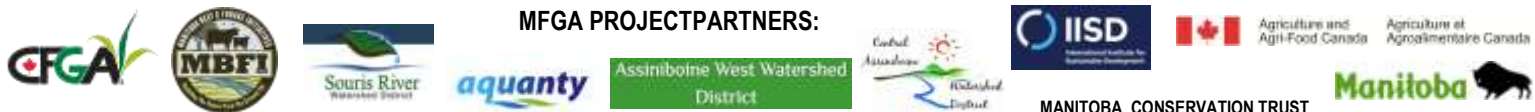
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## **What I'm hearing**

Although this report is a bit late it looks like the frost Saturday shouldn't have done a lot of damage in the area. Looking at the temperatures across the area it looks like temperatures for the West portion of the province got to a low of -2 in a few areas but for the most part stayed above or dipped just below 0. In the Central area it was very similar and although there were some reports of damage to alfalfa it was minor.

With sampling having taken place Monday the indication is that there has been some good growth in the alfalfa across most of the area and the alfalfa is still in the vegetative stage. With these warm temperatures we should start seeing some advancement in the alfalfa and water may be the next critical factor.

## **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 your 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 stage to put up 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.