

Comments:

Please make SAFETY a priority along with aiming to put up palatable hay or haylage feed.

May 22 - Stands in these fields look good. They have been slow-growing because of cool weather.

Cool weather tends to lower fiber and raise digestibility with less stem elongation and higher leaf/stem ratio.

Cool weather is thought to lower protein level. Protein on these samples were in a 26-27 range.

Cloudy weather tends to raise fiber and lower digestibility.

Wet weather tends to increase fiber with more stem elongation and a lower leaf to stem ratio.

It could be that it's been cold enough to stress plants and lower digestibility. It could be as plants put on new growth, RFV that appear to run lower now compared to height will be more in line. Time will tell. In the cool spring of 1997 most of our cooperators got into harvest around June 2-4.

2002 was also a cool and also a wet spring. It stayed wet through the summer. In 2002 sample fields at Buffalo Eden Valley, Freeport measured 10 to 13 inches. Alfalfa on these farms was cut after June 6.

Let's watch what a warmer weekend does. With Memorial Day on Monday, the next samples will likely be taken on Tuesday May 27 and then Thursday May 29. I'm told things are farther along as we go south in Minnesota.

You can look at Wisconsin Scissors Cut data at:

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/ag/scissorsclip>

May 28 - We have seen significant growth during the last week. It's not uncommon when conditions are not normal to see some numbers that don't look normal. It's not unusual to see some variation between PEAQ numbers and NIR lab tests. REMEMBER the margin of error on the NIR analysis is + or - 10 points. So if there was a way to know the lab test RFV should actually be 180, the range for a test could reasonably be 170 to 190. A RFV number from wet lab chemistry probably isn't much different. That does NOT make it useless, it just means you have to keep your brain plugged in and be a good student of your experience from year to year with the crop and with cows to apply what you could be learned from tests and field measurements. There is a margin of error for the PEAQ process. UWEX Dan Undersander, in the past has spoken with greater confidence in PEAQ numbers. Cool weather tends to improve digestibility, but can it be cold enough to stress the plant and get lower quality numbers than indicated by height and maturity?

We consider many guides for making harvest decisions any one of them (or a combination) could be the trump card in a given situation - Calendar, PEAQ reading, Lab NIR test, ADF, NDF, 22-26 inch height, buds showing, out of hay, kids leave for camp next week.

I'm NOT trying to do anyone's thinking for them (that's the farm operator's task - perhaps with your nutrition advisor) but here are some scenarios to illustrate some things people might be thinking:

1) It's the end of May, I want to maintain a cutting schedule for the rest of the summer, if the weather is good and the crop test is somewhere near the range I want, I could be cutting.

2) Like number 1 and I'm on lighter soils that don't usually support a hay crop in the middle of the summer, I'm going to harvest and make use of current moisture to get the 2nd crop started.

3) As at Stocker's on May 27, The PEAQ is 190 the lab says 162, it's the end of May, I'm seeing buds. If I think the real answer is 190, I might land 170 in the feed bunk. If I think the real answer is 162, I might land at 140 in the feed bunk. If being in a 140 to 170 range works well for my cows, and the weather looks suitable for harvest, I'm probably cutting for milk cow quality hay.

4) At Krause's on May 27, at 20.4 inches, vegetative stage, PEAQ and NIR running close at 210 and 201, ADF is creeping toward 30, but NDF is not as far along - if I don't feel pressed by the calendar or the weather on this farm, I think I'm OK to wait for the next one.

5) At Frerick's farm, a PEAQ at 217 and NIR at 264 and ADF/NDF at 23/25 - it doesn't matter what the neighbors are doing or what's on the calendar. That fits a pattern with the first test. I'm looking at abundant leaves and fine stems yet. Looking at the Calendar I'd like to be cutting. In the past a crop cut like this is too hot to handle. It's better for me to wait, gain some growth, look at the next test.

6) Ackerman or O&S Dairy are maybe a little tougher. PEAQ 217, NIR 197, ADF/NDF at 24/33 I could have time to wait, or the calendar, weather, importance of getting second cutting started could tip the balance toward doing some cutting. Past experience is important. If I land in the feed bunk at 190 to 200, am I ready with my nutrition advisor to deal with it effectively in the ration in the context of other feed ingredients we are working with?

Harvest strategies can make a difference in how things turn out. I think nutrition people have told me if I am harvesting at higher RFV and also put it up on the wet side, like haylage at 65-70% moisture, I increase the challenge of dealing with high soluble protein levels. See Jim Linn's discussion in Dairy Star 5/24.

2008 Alfalfa Harvest Alert Project - Central MN

Central MN Forage Council - U of M Extension Service - Cooperating Farmers and Agribusinesses

Hgt = Ave Height of Tallest Stem in inches

Mat = Maturity Stage where 1=Vegetative, 2=Bud, 3=Flower

PEAQ is the RFV based on height of tallest stem and maturity stage (Predictive Equation Alfalfa Quality)

LAB is RFV based on NIRS analysis at the Dairyland Lab in Sauk Rapids and Stearn DHIA Lab in Sauk Centre

ADF is Acid Detergent Fiber, NDF is Neutral Detergent Fiber based on Forage Lab test

The crop in the feedbunk is can be 15 to 25 RFV points lower than the Scissors Cut Sample or PEAQ estimate.

	Date:		June 2, 2008			June 5, 2008			June 9, 2008					
	Site	County	Hgt/	PEAQ	ADF/	Hgt/	PEAQ	ADF/	Hgt/	PEAQ	ADF/	Hgt/	PEAQ	ADF/
			Mat	LAB	NDF	Mat	LAB	NDF	Mat	LAB	NDF	Mat	LAB	NDF
1	Stockin	Scott												
	Near Jordan													
2	Lambrecht	Scott												
	S of Jordan													
3	Dreier	Carver												
	Norwood													
4	Hoen	Carver	31+	150	29									
	Cologne		2	157	40									
5	Wandersee	Carver												
	Watertown													
6	Benjamin	McLeod	25.5	173	31	29.7	157							
	NW of Hutchinson		2	152	40	2								
7	Barka	Meeker	25	177	28	28.4	162							
	SW of Litchfield		2	168	37	2								
8	Poppler	Wright	29	160	26	32	150	32						
	Waverly		2	181	35	2	140	42						
9	Krause	Wright	29	160	31	Cut June 2								
	West of Buffalo		2	176	34									
10	Gathje	Stearns	27	170	27	Cut June 2								
	NE of Eden Valley		2	202	31									
11	Maus	Stearns	24	181	30	25.7	174	27						
	South of Freeport		2	169	36	2	197	32						
12	Frericks	Stearns	24.5	179	21	30	156	27	35	139	31	*		
	North of Melrose		2	261	26	2	209	30	2	160	38			
13	Winkelman	Benton	24	184	24	26.3	171	26	30.2	155	32	*		
	East of Duelm		1.5	193	34	2	177	35	2	137	43			
14	Ackerman	Benton	25	180	25	28.3	163	28	30.4	155	31	Cut June 4		
	West of Foley		1.7	186	35	2	169	37	2	142	42	*		
15	New Seeding 07		23.2	186	25	27	168	28				Cut June 8		
	Ackerman		1.8	188	34	2	158	39						
16	O & S Dairy	Benton	24.5	180	25	27.3	167	30	29.1	165	32	Plan to Cut June 9		
	SE of Rice		1.9	184	35	2	156	39	2	144	42	*		
17	Roerick	Morrison	23.5	190	24	26	180	28						
	Near Upsala		1	237	28	V-B	191	33						
18									* CP around 23% on all 4 samples					

May 29

Most of our samplers, are expecting to see beginning bud stage by Monday June 2. At that point the weather will likely become more the driver for making harvest decisions. I exchanged a couple of emails with Dan Undersander at UWEX. He continues to lean more on PEAQ numbers than clipped sample NIR analysis. He says protein is sometimes lower when the weather is cold because bacteria are not as active in capturing nitrogen from the air around the roots, which would relate more to soil temperature. A couple people have asked about protein levels, so here's what crude protein was May 27: Benjamin 25, Barka 24, Krause 25, Gathje 25, Maus 27, Frericks 26, Winkelman 27, Ackerman 27, Ackerman New Sd 26, O&S Dairy 27, Roerick 28

There may be some discrepancies in how the Carver Scott Sample line up with dates. I have a date the sample was processed at the lab, not a clip date and it might be 1-2 days in the mail.

Mid American Auction will conduct an extra HAY SALE on Thursday June 12. They had 69 loads at an extra sale held May 29.

June 2 Crop is getting ready, weather isn't. The lab test and PEAQ estimates are running closer now on more fields. Most field are being listed in the Bud Stage now (Early). This means if you look real close at the end of the stem, you will find some beginning buds. It could be 7 to 14 days before we might find an actual blossom - weather dependent of course.

Watch trend line. For example, the lab test at the Maus farm on 06 02 may be low compared to PEAQ, previous tests on this farm, what other fields appear to be doing. and we might be thinking more about the weather when we get in a bud stage and a crop 24 inches or taller.

HAIL a week ago southwest and south east of St. Martin did a fair amount of damage to the hay crop. The worst I saw on 06 02 08 was that was mostly 8 inch stubble. A scissors cut sample from this tested 178 RFV with 21.7% crude protein. There was some hail in the Elk River/Anoka area also. A good discussion about hail damage related decisions is posted at

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/forages> - Managing Hail Damaged Alfalfa ... OR

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/forage/pubs/HAIL.htm> - Managing Hail Damaged Alfalfa and Red Clover

As in most problem situations, on either end of the spectrum decisions are well defined, then there's all the ground in the middle.

June 9 A few more people trying to do some cutting now. Some fields are soft. Some lodged badly. A forage lab says RFQ numbers are running higher than RFV numbers, indicating the cool weather may have held digestibility better than RFV indicates and crop may feed better than expected.

For information on using and interpreting Scissors-Cut and PEAQ data go to

<http://www1.umn.edu/mfgc/scissors.htm>

For more information related to the Central MN project call

Dan Martens at 1-800-964-4929 - Stearns, Benton and Morrison County Extension

Nathan Winter - McLeod-Meeker Extension Office 320-587-0770;

Laura Kieser - Scott-Carver Extension, 952-5410

Brad Irwin - Aitkin County Extension 218-927-7322

A Recorded report can be heard by calling Info U at 1-800-525-8636. When the systems answers enter 971 as the topic where the message is posted. We aim to update this each day we get new information

A live report is a made on KASM 1150 AM about 6:45 a.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday Mornings.

Efforts are made to share Information with KLTF 960 AM Little Falls and other local stations,

KDUZ 1260 AM Hutchinson, KLFD 1410 AM Litchfield, KRWC 1360 AM Buffalo, KEYL 1400 AM Long Prairie.

A spreadsheet summary that includes ADF/NDF might be posted at

www.extension.umn.edu/cropenews

This is updated if the webmaster gets to it.

Cooperating Sponsors:

Central Minnesota Forage Council

Barry Visser, Vita Plus

Dan Kohls, Form A Feed Ag Service

Greg Lefebvre, Nelson Dairy Consulting

Others will be listed as we get information

Stearns DHIA Lab

Dairyland Labs

U of M Extension Service

Kevin Rolling, Croplan Genetics