

Field Crop Report



Corn Silage: Greg Stewart/Joel Bagg

Corn is maturing significantly ahead of normal. Harvesting corn silage at the correct moisture is critical for obtaining optimal silage fermentation and animal performance. Walk your fields, monitor whole plant moistures, and be ready to fill silo. Silage moistures that are too low result in poor packing and fermentation which increases dry matter losses, heating and spoilage, poor bunk life, and lower starch digestibility. Kernel processors can help compensate to some extent. Harvesting at moisture levels above 70% will result in lower yield, high levels of butyric acid, high dry matter losses, seepage, poor feed quality, reduced palatability and lower intake.

The best silage fermentation and livestock performance occurs when whole plant moisture is 65 to 70%. Watch for variability between and within fields. Recommended moisture levels are 65 - 70% for horizontal, 62 - 68% for bag, and 62 - 67% for most upright silos.

Whole plant silage moisture is difficult to accurately determine. The traditional one-half to two-thirds milk line guideline is limited by considerable variation due to dry weather and hybrid differences. Chop a sample and measure the moisture content with a microwave, commercially available tester (eg. Koster) or by laboratory analysis. This procedure takes a little time, but is worthwhile when you consider the impact correct moisture will have on forage quality and animal performance for the whole year. Microwaves and on-farm testers typically under-estimate field moistures by up to 3%. In a typical year corn silage dries at about 0.5 % moisture per day, but the rate will be higher in dry conditions. Refer to the following for more information on the subject. (<http://bit.ly/omafacornsilage1>, <http://fieldcropnews.com/?p=4243>, <http://fieldcropnews.com/?p=4976>, <http://fieldcropnews.com/?p=4813>)

Scout Soybeans Now: Albert Tenuta

It is that time of year when late season soybean diseases develop as the crop approaches the finish line. Although these diseases do occur at other times of the season, they are most apparent when the soybean crop enters the final reproductive stages of development. Therefore, now is an excellent time to go on your preharvest scout as well as evaluate your selected varieties performance to date. Make note of which diseases, insects or other problems are present and to what degree. Are you seeing diseases such as stem canker, Cercospora leaf blight, Phytophthora root rot, Fusarium wilt, charcoal rot, white mould or other diseases or problems? If so draw a field map and note where and how much disease is present. Remember every field is different and therefore get in the habitat of doing this for each field. This information in conjunction with harvest data will help you in selecting the appropriate varieties geared to your specific needs as well as implement the appropriate management strategies for 2013 and beyond.

Forages/Pastures: Joel Bagg/Jack Kyle

Critical Fall Harvest Period for Alfalfa

Reduced forage inventories will make it tempting to cut alfalfa this fall. The immediate need for forage should be weighed against the increased risk of alfalfa winterkill. The Critical Fall Harvest Period (CFHP) for alfalfa is the 6-week period preceding the average killing frost date for an area. Avoiding cutting during this time allows alfalfa plants to build up sufficient root reserves to survive the winter and grow more aggressively next spring. Harvesting during the CFHP will use existing root reserves for alfalfa regrowth, "emptying the tank" and increasing the risk of winter kill. Later in the period, the alfalfa uses photosynthesis to produce carbohydrates and stores them as root reserves, "refilling the tank".

The Critical Fall Harvest Period begins as early as August 10th in northern Ontario, August 25 - 30th for eastern and central Ontario, and September 4th in the southwest. However, it is difficult to predict when that killing frost will actually occur.

Cutting in the middle of the CFHP is of higher risk than cutting at the beginning or end. Even when winterkill does not occur, the extra yield harvested during the CFHP is typically offset by reduced 1st-cut yield the following spring. Fields with older stands, a history of winterkill, low potassium soil test levels, low pH, poor drainage, or insect and disease pressure are at increased risk of winterkill and are poor candidates for fall harvesting. Additionally, aggressive intervals of less than 30 days between cuts increases the risk of winterkill, while intervals over 40 days (allowing flowering), reduces the risk. We frequently see fields with disappointing 1st-cut yields where a 4th-cut was taken the preceding fall.

If fall harvest must be done, cutting towards the end of alfalfa growth (killing frost) will reduce but not eliminate the risk of winterkill. Leaving at least 6 inches of stubble will help trap snow to insulate the alfalfa crowns during cold weather. Stubble will also protrude through winter ice sheeting reducing the negative impact. If harvest occurs after a killing frost, alfalfa feed value will decline rapidly due to leaf loss and rapid rain leaching of nutrients (<http://bit.ly/omafraforages10>).

Pastures

Pasture growth has resumed in most areas that received late July and early August rains. Ensure the pasture develops at least 7-10 cm of growth before grazing resumes or you will set back the plants back and have reduced yields for the remainder of the season. Fertilizer at 40-50 kg/ per ha of N along with P and K at recommended rates from soil testing will help strengthen the forage plants. Allow pastures to build needed root reserves this fall to improve next year's yields. Further details at <http://bit.ly/omafrapastures2> and <http://bit.ly/omafrapastures3>.

Weather Summary



Location	Aug 15 - Aug 21 2012	Temperature (°C)		Rainfall (mm)	Heat Units CHU	Total Since May 1	
		Max	Min			Rain	CHU
Outdoor	2012	23.6	9.8	5.8	134.2	267.2	2457.3
Farm Show	30 Yr. Avg.	24.8	13.9	15.4	167.6	310.6	2383.9
Windsor	2012	25	14.5	11.2	171.8	317.1	2924
	30 Yr. Avg.	26	15.4	17	180.2	281.3	2593.2
Trenton	2012	25.1	11.5	0.3	153.3	228.1	2597.4
	30 Yr. Avg.	24.7	13.3	15.7	163.5	283.6	2300.4
Mount Forest	2012	22.1	9.5	1.9	129	243.7	2356.5
	30 Yr. Avg.	24	12.8	17.4	158.2	309.2	2213.2
London	2012	24.5	10.1	1.1	144.1	229.1	2616
	30 Yr. Avg.	24.9	14	14.7	168.9	308.5	2409.2
Hamilton	2012	26.6	11.1	2.9	155.9	169.8	2562.4
	30 Yr. Avg.	25.1	14.6	15.7	172.9	290.6	2420.6
Ottawa	2012	24.9	12.8	0.2	160.1	218.4	2581.9
	30 Yr. Avg.	25.1	13.6	15.3	166.7	317.3	2390.5
Elora	2012	22.7	8.1	2.8	123.1	188.2	2357.8
	30 Yr. Avg.	24.5	13	16.5	161.3	308.3	2275.2
Peterborough	2012	24.1	8.4	0.3	130.6	275.9	2372.1
	30 Yr. Avg.	24.4	13	17	160.6	287.6	2265.2

For more information please contact the CropLine at 1-888-449-0937, www.omafra.gov.on.ca/croppest, www.fieldcropnews.com

