

# Early Edition!

Volume 2 Issue 1

March 23, 2012

## Checking the Back Forty



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The current growing conditions with 80 degree temperatures are remarkable and has everyone asking the question is it time to start and my answer is yes, depending on what you are talking about.

It is certainly time to get nitrogen on grasses and winter grains. The clock has already started ticking, ie... there have been enough growing degree days that grasses and legumes have started to grow. We may return to some cooler and more normal weather that slows growth but we won't turn the clock back. To me we are as much as two weeks early. Cutting orchardgrass in April? I can't imagine temperatures like these will continue but who would have thought we would have 80 degree days the third week of March..

I do not believe it is too early to be planting new seedlings and crops such as spring grains and field peas. However I have heard people ask the corn question as if early warm weather means we will then likewise be planting corn early. Let's not get carried away. Corn is a next level when it comes to needing warmer temperatures to germinate and grow. Someone would need to present some very strong evidence of a continued heat wave into May to have me think we should now be thinking of planting corn April 15 or before. I would still be shooting at that last week of April as the earliest.

I have found alfalfa plants frost heaved this spring (picture at right) as expected given the open winter. Also as you might expect the heaving isn't leaving whole fields bare, more finding plants out of the ground in compacted areas, wheel tracks and high traffic areas at exits to fields. There is also heaving in the wetter areas, the seeps in a side hill or low spots. Plants that are dead are fairly obvious, as they are out of the ground several inches, no new shoot growth and pull out of the ground easily as the tap root is broke. May be worth taking a look at fields to determine if they should be kept or are you may be better off planting corn. My take is most fields should be kept; it is more the fields have aged by a year or two and may need to be rotated out quicker.

