

Checking the Back Forty



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Weekly Growing Degree Days and Rainfall thru June 30, 2013

This is only the second Checking the Back 40 this year. It has been a crop year of extremes, dry enough to reduce first cutting yields but then too wet to harvest 1st cutting on time and to get corn planting finished. Some nights early on frosted corn leaves but that early corn came back so that you wouldn't know it had been frosted.

See the weather info below for where we stand to date. This year I have picked planting dates of April 29 and May 13 on which to base GDD estimations. Overall we are only 3-4 days ahead of average growing degree days based on these planting dates, some sites and little more, others a little less.

Although I usually make some attempt to characterize crop growth in particular corn it is hard to do. Early planted corn on well drained soils is starting to canopy and will make "knee high by the 4th of July" but much of the corn is shorter. Soybeans are from just germinating to V4 and 11 inches tall. Hay stands that were cut May 20 or earlier have made second cutting but often the first cutting hasn't been made in other fields.

As you can see in the weather data below we have more than made up the early dry weather and are 3-7 inches ahead in rainfall as of last Sunday. Many fields are saturated and the water is just laying there.

Station	Temperature (°F)				Growing Degree Days (GDD)-Base 50°F					Precipitation (Inches) 1/			
	High	Low	Avg	Departure from normal	Week of June 24- June 30	Since April 29, 2013	Departure from normal	Since May 13, 2013	Departure from normal	Week	Departure from normal	Season	Departure from normal
Cobleskill	88	58	73	8	159	673	76	577	40	2.48	1.52	16.40	5.28
Morrisville	88	59	72	8	154	719	157	600	95	2.87	1.96	17.87	7.00
Norwich	90	59	72	7	156	684	88	586	53	4.12	3.21	17.09	5.90
Oneonta	90	58	71	7	149	662	117	547	55	3.05	2.07	15.26	3.27

*From the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service New York Field Office and the New York Department of Agriculture and Markets
 Weekly accumulations are through 7:00 AM Sunday Morning*

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1/ Season accumulations are for April 1st to date. Weekly accumulations are through 7:00 AM Sunday Morning

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Pests of the this summer

Last summer armyworms and potato leafhoppers were devastating to crops. This year we have not found armyworms locally although I hear of sporadic sitings though out NY, nothing of consequence. Remember armyworms can be a problem locally any year so checking your own fields is always advised. Typically second cutting grass is a favorite target, also small grains and corn planted in grassy fields.



Potato leafhoppers (PLH) on a sweep net.

Potato Leafhoppers (PLH) have been present since some of the first storms to pass through in May. I have not found them above threshold, but they seem to be ever present and I have seen nymphs which indicates they have reproduced. The weather has not been conducive to PLH given the cooler temperatures and rainfall we have had. I typically warn to watch new seeding regrowth but I have not found them abundant there this year. Given when PLH arrive they usually have enough time to complete a lifecycle before that first cutting of the new seeding. So on the PLH front, they are present and you need to be aware that some fields may go over threshold but there does not seem to be a general problem as in 2012.

I found my first soybean aphids (SBA) last week in one field. There were 20 or less per plant (economic threshold >250 per plant) and only on the newest trifoliolate leaves that were not fully extended. What is always interesting is that the predators of SBA seem to alert you to their presence. This field had just a few ladybugs and the SBA were there. Predators often keep this insect in check.

Wet weather woes...

From too wet to floods

In the past week we have gone from just too wet to flood conditions in some fields. I want to address both situations.

Too wet

The problems with wet fields go from being unable to harvest hay crops to unplanted fields. A couple thoughts for being unable to harvest. If you are lacking quality feed don't worry about those fields that are first cutting that hasn't been harvested. That hay will never get better in quality. Keep after the fields that you can do multiple cuttings through the end of the season. These are likely the driest fields and given the rainfall we have had should reward with good quality growth. As a matter of fact if you get cuttings off these fields and they have a significant amount of grass applying nitrogen will pay as there is plenty of soil moisture to drive the next cutting.

Corn fields that are light green to yellow are likely nitrogen deficient and you should consider a sidedress N application, provided you can get in the field. To be clear this is not addressing traditionally wet areas where not only denitrification has taken place but plants are actually

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stunted by the excessive water. There are fields, and likely you have a few, that given normal rainfall or less you usually have enough nitrogen applied. This year whole fields have been saturated, not just the wet spots, long enough that denitrification has taken place. This is more likely to take place on finer textured soils. Possibly higher organic matter fields or fields with high manure application rates may still mineralize N to the end of the season. It may not turn out to be practical to make a sidedress application given how wet the fields are and/or how tall the corn is but I offer you consider it.

If you have corn fields that are yet to be planted you can still plant corn but as we hit July 10-20 we are definitely on the road to drastically lower yields. After July 20 don't bother. It has been shown as you go later in the season and only getting what ever fodder you can that later corn and at higher populations can give higher yields. All I would offer is that if you have corn seed and a planter ready to go just go get the seed in the ground. Another thought is to now hold off until the end of July and plant a spring grain like oats. Oats planted by Aug 1 can make some great forage both in quality and quantity by the end of September.

Flooded crops

First if you have any flooded crops make sure you report them to the local FSA office and your crop insurance agent before taking steps to do anything with them. Document the damage done. If you have had crops flooded by one of the local rivers or creeks do not feed these crops.

Corn that hasn't been damaged by the flow of water and silt and under water less than 24 hours is likely to recover. Corn that was flooded at this stage could be harvested above the silted area come fall.

Soybeans at their current stage again are just approaching flowering and as long as they haven't been damaged by the flow of water and silt and under water less than 24 hours are likely to recover. Damage to a harvestable crop should be minimal because pods have yet to form.

All standing hay and pasture should be removed from the field if possible especially if you are trying to get any growth out of the remainder of the season. It should not be fed or used for bedding. This may be most easily accomplished by harvesting as large round bales. Blowing back on the field using a chopper is a possibility, one to be used reluctantly, if cut short and you feel fairly confident of a lack of debris. Running any of this silt covered material through machinery is likely to cause excessive wear. It would be a good idea to wash/sanitize machinery when done. Also there will be a great deal of dust when working with this material so the use of appropriate dust masks is encouraged.

Keep animals out of flooded pasture areas until at minimum they can be clipped and you have checked for debris. Best if animals are kept out until next spring. Pastures that have had excessive silting and may have had plant loss may be need to be reseeded. Legume and grass plants will probably recover from modest amounts of deposited silt, 1-3 inches. Beyond that may mean the need to replant because the plants have been smothered.