

Checking the Back Forty



Kevin H. Ganoë

Regional Field Crop Specialist

Central New York Dairy & Field Crops Team
Cornell Cooperative Extension of
Chenango, Fulton, Herkimer, Otsego, Mont-
gomery, Saratoga and Schoharie Counties
5657 State Route 5, Herkimer, NY 13350
Phone: 315-866-7920 Cell: 315-219-7786
FAX: 315-866-0870
khg2@cornell.edu

Starting a new growing season... a more normal growing season?

Last year by this time I had sent out two Checking the Back 40's, the first the third week of March, when seedings were being planted and hay crops were starting to move. By April 13 I sent second out talking about how that early hay crop had been affected by the deep freezes we were having.

The 2013 growing season seems to be starting out a little more normal or average pace, if there is such a thing. Here is a comparison of weather data from the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service to date in 2012 to 2013:

Station	Temperature (°F)				Growing Degree Days Base 50° ^{1/2}			Precipitation (Inches) ^{1/2}				
	High	Low	Avg	Departure from normal	Week	Season	Departure from normal	Week	Departure from normal	Season	Departure from normal	
2012	Weather Data for Week Ending Sunday, April 29, 2012											
Cobleskill	55	26	40	-9	0	54	34	1.81	1.04	2.93	-0.26	
Morrisville	54	23	36	-12	0	41	24	2.24	1.47	3.52	0.52	
Norwich	55	23	38	-11	0	37	16	1.81	0.97	2.79	-0.48	
Oneonta	64	26	43	-5	0	53	36	1.62	0.74	3.09	-0.29	
2013	Weather Data for Week Ending Sunday, April 28, 2013											
Cobleskill	70	26	46	3	9	10	5	1.49	0.72	3.28	0.98	
Morrisville	71	26	47	4	9	12	9	0.91	0.17	3.29	1.19	
Norwich	71	29	46	1	2	7	2	1.04	0.27	3.32	1.03	
Oneonta	70	28	47	4	3	12	8	0.92	0.08	2.65	0.29	

^{1/2} Season accumulations are for April 1st to date.

Weekly accumulations are through 7:00 AM Sunday Morning

This weather data is accumulated starting April 1 so in 2012 some of the Growing Degree Days (GDDs) that occurred in March are not included in the end of April total. Still by the end of April 2012 the departure from normal for GDDs was fairly high where for the 2013 growing season things are shaping up a little more normal. Interesting that in 2012 the last week of April was actually cooler than normal but we were still GDDs ahead.

May 7 starts First Cutting Forage Quality Project!

Staying with the how much each year is different theme, in 2012 the CNY Dairy and Field Crops Team started monitoring hay fields May 1 for our First Cutting Forage Quality Project. Mostly grass fields at lower elevations and in the southern part of our region were ready to be cut then! The team has been out this week making a quick run through and many alfalfa fields are at most 8 inches or less, a few to 10 inches. We look to cut near by grass stands when alfalfa is 14 inches tall, 50/50 mixed stands with alfalfa 22 inches high and pure alfalfa stand when the alfalfa is 28 inches tall to achieve optimal forage yield and quality.



If you aren't familiar there is a very good correlation between alfalfa height and the level of Neutral Detergent Fiber in not only alfalfa but also grasses. The team monitors fields throughout our region in May to give forage producers some idea of the optimal time to harvest that important 1st cutting. When to start varies as much as 2 weeks in our region depending where you are, elevation and soil type. So keep a watch you should receive your first project summary next week.

When to look for alfalfa weevil?

This subject has come up quite a bit lately given there was damage to 1st cutting alfalfa last year that was unexpected although really shouldn't have been. When the max number of alfalfa weevil will be present is GDD day driven. Thing is the base temperature for alfalfa is 41° F and the base temperature for alfalfa weevils is 48° F. The base temperature is the temperature you need to achieve to get growth of the particular plant or insect in question. In particular alfalfa weevil needs 300 GDDs with a base temp of 48° F for eggs to hatch. So as you can see alfalfa weevil doesn't coincide with a particular stage of alfalfa growth. There are years that temperatures are such that alfalfa growth may be excellent because the 41° F base temperature is met but not warm enough days to meet the weevils 48° F. In those years alfalfa weevil is an issue more in the second in the second cutting keeping back that regrowth. More on alfalfa weevil as we get closer to the GDDs needed for the larvae to be present.

Looking for field crop info in NY, start with fieldcrops.org

If you are interested in what is happening with field crops across NY then the place to start is: <http://fieldcrops.org/Pages/Home.aspx>