

Checking the Back Forty

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Planting silage corn...still

If you have cows to feed, corn seed to plant and a few dry (or maybe not) hours to get in the field you are planting corn. Dry matter content and quality will likely get sorted out later.

But if you do have a moment or two to consider quality and maturity in the planting season left I offer these thoughts:

Joe Lauer the corn specialist at Wisconsin has research that points to two sweet spots or peaks for corn silage quality and yield. First is the normal one we deal with which means getting the corn to a maturity that there is grain fill and the plant dries down to a harvest moisture on its own. If you are still trying for that grain filled maturity then you likely have another week or so to plant 80-85 day RM hybrids given 15 and 30 year Growing Degree Day (GDD) averages. This relates to 1800 GDDs to mature the corn and expecting that the corn would be mature the end of September and ahead of frost. Also helpful is that as hybrids are planted later they tend to reduce the number of days needed to reach maturity.

The second sweet spot is the less desirable one but one you need to consider under these conditions. If you plant corn late enough you can be counting on frost drying your corn and not considering grain fill. That being the case the second peak is at tasseling/silking. Corn being like any other grass actually loses quality or gains fiber as it becomes reproductive. So from right before silking until the milk stage (R3) total whole plant quality is decreasing. But at silking whole plant dry matter yield maxes out until grain fill starts and the plant is losing quality for a number of weeks because there is no grain to compensate. If you are going to rely on frost to dry your corn silage and you want to maximize yield and quality you can be better off growing a long season hybrid that won't silk until a frost occurs.

If you want to know the GDDs at your farm go to:

For GDDs: <http://climatesmartfarming.org/tools/csf-growing-degree-day-calculator/>

References

Corn Agronomy: How Late Can I Plant Corn?

<http://wisccorn.blogspot.com/2013/06/B039.html>

Joe Lauer, Department of Agronomy, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Corn Agronomy: Harvesting Barren and Poorly Pollinated Corn

<http://wisccorn.blogspot.com/2012/07/harvesting-barren-and-poorly-pollinated.html>

Joe Lauer, Department of Agronomy, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Hybrid Maturity Decisions for Delayed Planting

<https://www.agry.purdue.edu/ext/corn/news/timeless/HybridMaturityDelayedPlant.html>

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Potato Leafhoppers Found



Starting to find potato leafhoppers (PLH) in second cutting alfalfa and in new seedings. A sweep net can gather up a bunch of insects like pea aphids or maybe even alfalfa weevil larvae this time of year but the potato leafhoppers stand out... if they sit still long enough. Marked in the pictures at left with an arrow, adults are light green, wedge-shaped and about 1/8 of an inch long. Nymphs which are the younger PLH do not fly, they crawl. Much smaller than adults and more yellow-green, nymphs are an indication that a new generation has started in your field

This will be a year where you will likely find PLH moving from field to field with harvest as they look for the fields with new growth.

Reference: <https://fieldcrops.cals.cornell.edu/forages/insects-forage-crops/potato-leafhopper/>

Alfalfa Weevil



Keep a watch on alfalfa fields that you have cut and don't seem to be coming back as they should. Yes it could be the cold and rain but more likely weevil larvae chewing on that new growth. Given the GDDs to date, alfalfa weevil larvae should be starting to form cocoons soon and stop feeding.

Armyworms



Time to start scouting for armyworms. Favorite crops and situations are small grains, corn fields where the cover or sod was killed, and second cutting grass hay fields. The key here is that grasses attract the moths for egg laying. Some have been found in the western part of the state. During the day you may find larvae under residue or in the whorl on corn plants.