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Checking the Back Forty



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Will it make it for Corn Silage?

There is always the need to plan for harvest but this difficult year makes it a little harder than usual. You may have decided you are just happy to have corn in the ground and will just keep checking it and when the most of what you have planted is at a dry matter you can live with you will harvest.

I thought I would take a stab at three harvest scenarios given the GDDs we have had to date and what we know of average growing degree days from the past 15 years likely to occur up to harvest. In the table below you can see I have thirteen locations through out our region and the elevation for that location. The first scenario on the left looks at an "80 day RM hybrid" planted June 10 with the thought that if you changed seed to an earlier hybrid this scenario might fit. I have the GDDs to date and then what a predicted date might be to hit 1800 GDDs which you might expect to have whole plant corn dry matters in the 30-35% range with a milk line formed. The second scenario goes to a "90 day RM hybrid" planted June 1 and a third plating a "100 day RM hybrid" hybrid May 20.

Table 1

Three planting scenarios and predicted harvest dates to achieve 30-35% DM based on GDDs, planting date and location. Data from July 7, 2019.

		Planting Date June 10		Planting Date June 1		Planting Date May 20	
			Date to reach		Date to reach		Date to reach
		GDDs	1800 GDDs	GDDs	1950 GDDs	GDDs	2100 GDDs
		Season	approx 80 Day	Season	approx 90 Day	Season	approx 100
Location	Elevation	To Date	RM hybrid	To Date	RM Hybrid	To Date	Day RM Hybrid
Bainbridge	1000	440	Oct 4	544	Oct 9	674	Oct 11
Bouckville	1170	412	Oct 10	514	Oct 18	619	Nov 4
Canastota	420	470	Sep 15	585	Sep 17	711	Sep 19
Cherry Valley	758	443	Sep 22	559	Sep 26	670	Sep 29
Cobleskill	937	429	Oct 1	521	Oct 9	627	Oct 15
Frankfort	530	434	Sep 29	534	Oct 5	638	Oct 11
Fultonville	489	522	Sep 9	639	Sep 12	777	Sep 13
Galway	749	498	Sep 19	607	Sep 23	739	Sep 24
Oneonta	1107	411	Oct 12	512	Oct 21	625	Nov 3
Richfield Springs	1580	390	Nov 13	480	/	570	/
Saratoga Springs	365	503	Sep 17	591	Sep 21	716	Sep 23
Sherburne	1115	439	Sep 29	548	Oct 5	674	Oct 7
St Johnsville	650	431	Oct 9	522	Oct 20	619	Nov 21

Continued...

Will it make it for Corn Silage?...continued

There isn't a doubt these predictions come with a whole lot of assumptions, but they begin to put some numbers to what we likely guessed. If you got 80-85 day corn to plant in June you might, given the past 15 year GDD average for a June 10 plant date, actually have a chance to get it to a harvest dry matter before a frost. With that should come grain fill to get reasonable quality. If you look at the other two scenarios with earlier plant dates, longer season hybrids and in particular higher elevations then chances at some locations take on more risk. These two dates would represent where farms had seed and likely went ahead and planted what they had when they could. At some locations given average GDDs to the end of the season you might not fair to bad. Others locations if we don't do better than average the frost will definitely be needed to bring moisture down.

At the end of the day this is really about harvesting corn silage at a dry matter where it will ensile properly. Although we need corn to physically mature to help drive that %DM higher we know characteristics like dent, kernel milk line may tell us there is kernel fill but don't line up the best with whole plant dry matter.

So if there is any good news it is the trend for GDDs got a big boost these past few weeks and the fifteen and thirty year trends are more towards finishing the season with average GDDs if we can keep that heat coming. Although 2017 makes 2019 look really good because we at least got corn planted if it wasn't for the late heat we got in August and early September we would have been harvesting even later than we did. We still have that same chance to finish warmer than it has been. Later planted corn will mature or go through its reproductive stages to black layer with fewer GDDs than early planted corn so that is good news but still doesn't exactly get us to predicting whole plant DM content at harvest.

As I will continue to do, I encourage you to look at the Cornell Climate Smart Farming website and utilize the CSF Growing Degree Day Calculator found at:

http://climatesmartfarming.org/tools/csf-growing-degree-day-calculator/

At this website you can find your farm and fields on a map, set the planting date(s) then see the current GDDs, fifteen and thirty year average GDDs and historical high and low GDD values.

I have made a number of assumptions making these projections especially on hybrid relative maturity and GDDs so I encourage you to talk to your seeds people as the first authority on how your particular hybrids may perform under these conditions.

References

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Leafhoppers and Armyworms

Plenty of potato leafhoppers around and will be now through next month and still active. Watch for them to move from field to field with harvest and keep a sharp eye on new seedings.

Have heard first reports armyworms of in grass hay fields. I haven't seen these but you may want to check on those fields that you haven't looked at in a while. Even if you don't see feed-ing higher up on the grass you may find them hiding under trash at soil level. Flocks of birds feeding can be a great indicator armyworms are present.

Summer seedings not fall seedings

If you are looking to seed yet this season forget the idea it is a fall or even late summer seeding. Ideal time is last week of July. In the past August 1 was considered the date but often that was just that the date people were considering seeding and planting two weeks later. So just the reminder to have seed lined up, equipment ready and fields prepped so you can plant that last week of July.

I often get asked about planting these summer seedings with oats. Leave them out. Oats get a lot of growth coming into fall and are way too much competition for the seeding in my experience. You want that new seeding to get as much growth before winter as it can. However given the year if you have land open oats make a great forage crop to plant alone for fall forage. Planted by August 1 you should expect crop to be ready by last of September.

Marestail (Horseweed)

Just reminder to be on the look out for one of two weeds that have can have glyphosate resistance, in this case marestail or horseweed. In some instances there may even be resistance to Group 2, ALS inhibitor, herbicides like Classic and FirstRate.

Marestail can emerge in the fall as well as the spring and when emerging in the fall can have a good start in the spring and be more difficult to control. In particular look to notill soybeans as a place for these weeds to become established as tillage and some corn herbicides are effective in providing control.

Making sure you start with clean fields, using multiple modes of action, spraying when weeds are under five inches, crop rotations and even removing small patches by hand can all lead to better control of this weed.

Reference: https://extension.psu.edu/marestailhorseweed-management

