Cornell Cooperative Extension Northwest NY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Program

AG FOCUS



Forage Quality & 1st Cutting by Jodi Putman

We are so excited to be back in the field with you! To kick off the season, let's start with knowing when the right time for 1st cutting of hay crops will be. Harvest is not linked to a certain calendar date but instead is dependent on growing degree day accumulation (heat) and soil moisture. Now is the time to check your winter triticale's growth stage. Triticale should be harvested at Feekes 9-flag leaf stage for optimal quality. At this stage the collar of the flag leaf will be visible. Many fields across the region are just entering Feeke's stage 8. At stage 8 the flag leaf is just emerging from the top of the plant. Fields will need to be closely monitored over the next 2 weeks to ensure harvest occurs at the right time. Mike Stanyard put together a short video showing the optimal time for triticale harvest and how to determine Feeke's stage 9, https:// youtu.be/NIk2X-tM84Q

Harvesting hay at the proper growth stage will also ensure high quality feed and hopefully can reduce the amount of grain supplemented in the feed ration. A guide and chart have been provided below to help you determine proper timing to obtain the highest quality forage.

Measuring the height of alfalfa has been proven to be the best indicator of harvest time for your local climatic conditions and individual fields. Predicting percentages of mixed stands can be difficult and a high percentage of people tend to overestimate the amount of alfalfa in the stand. Sampling and weighing the grass and alfalfa samples can help determine the mix percentage and train your eye to estimate hay mix percentage with more accuracy. Dr. Cherney of Cornell has developed an accurate system to assist in your

percentage prediction at http://www.forages.org/ index.php/tools-grassman. Click on the grass, alfalfagrass, or the alfalfa estimator to initiate prediction. You will be asked to enter in alfalfa height, percent grass, NDF target, and weather (normal, hot, cool) and the system will tell you how many days until your field, under your conditions will be at peak quality for harvest.

To help give the producer an idea of when to harvest first cutting, I will be out measuring alfalfa height to predict Neutral Detergent Fiber (NDF) for alfalfa, alfalfa-grass mixtures and grass stands in several fields across the 9 counties. Field locations will reflect the diversity of heat, elevation and soil moisture in the area.

Here are helpful numbers when using alfalfa and grass height as an indicator of NDF content:



Percentage Stand	Alfalfa Height	NDF Goal	What to do:
100 % Grass Stand	13 Inches tall	50% NDF	Start to cut Grass Stands
50% Grass- 50% Alfalfa	23 Inches tall	44% NDF	Cut your Mixed Stands
100 % Alfalfa	30 Inches tall	40% NDF	Cut Alfalfa Stands
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NEW The NWNY Team Blog!

Our goal for this blog is to share with farmers and allied industry professionals, technical and applicable resources regarding all aspects of dairy farming, livestock and small farms, field crops and soils, and topics related to farm business management and precision agriculture.

The blog will feature **Crop Alerts, Dairy Alerts, Bilingual (Spanish) Resources, Upcoming Events** and more from our team members. When new material is published, subscribers will receive an email notification.

You can visit the blog at: <u>https://blogs.cornell.edu/nwny-dairy-livestock-field-crops/</u>



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Pasture Flies: Take the Integrated Approach to Control

by Nancy Glazier

Pasture season is here, and along with it comes flies. The three of most concern are face fly, horn fly and stable fly. They each have their own feeding locations on livestock, but have similar life cycles. They all have complete metamorphosis, which means they lay eggs that hatch into larvae, then pupate and emerge as adults. Critical for control is identification, habitat management, monitoring, and assessment. They lead to animal stress; they reduce grazing time which in turn reduces production, whether milk or gain. These reductions can be seasonal, or with youngstock, cumulative.

The face fly resembles the house fly but is about 20% larger. It is a non-biting fly and the female feeds on proteins around the face; they hang out near the eyes, muzzle, and mouth. They can serve as vectors for diseases such as pinkeye. Also, they can congregate around wounds and feed on blood. Males generally feed on nectar and hang out on fence posts or branches to wait for the females as they move about. After mating, the female lays her eggs (up to 600) on very fresh manure. The time from egg to adult is 2-3 weeks, depending on temperatures.

The horn fly is about half the size of the face fly. Both male and female horn flies feed by biting and take up to 20 blood meals a day. They will congregate on backs, sides, and shoulders of livestock. The female will lay 200-400 eggs in her life on fresh manure.

The stable fly is also a biting fly. It is dark gray and slightly smaller than the house fly. This species is seen on the legs of livestock; when they congregate, livestock stomp their feet to try to dislodge them. They are the ones that take a bite on your ankles when you are out in the yard. The female is less specific where she lays her eggs (200-400): moist organic matter such as manure, spilled feeds, silage, grass clippings, and vegetation on edges of ponds and lakes.

Each species has an action threshold, the number where it makes economic sense to treat. This requires counting flies on animals out on pastures. A good representation is needed, the more animals the better, with a minimum of 10 to 15 to develop an average. You need to get close enough to count, so move slowly. Sample on a weekly basis at roughly the same time and write down what you see. A pocket pad works well.

Thresholds:

Face fly - 10 flies/face. Horn fly - about 100 flies per animal for dairy, about 200 flies per animal for beef. Stable fly - 10 flies/4 legs of the animal. Control can involve cultural, mechanical, biological and chemical; most years it will take a combination of methods. Habitat management is a critical step in breaking the life cycle and proliferation. Populations can explode when a female lays 400 eggs over the course of 3-4 weeks if not controlled. Keep feeds dry, clean up spills, move outside feeders if possible. Various species of ground beetles, flies, and dung beetles may be present in manure. These arthropods disperse and dry up the pat



A sticky trap is one option to help with fly control. Photo: N. Glazier/ NWNY Team

to break the fly lifecycle. Chickens and other birds can help with this, too. If manure does not dry up quickly you may want to utilize pasture chains or drags to disperse the pats.

Many farms purchase parasitoid wasps. These need to be timed and released early enough for them to reproduce along with flies. Female wasps lay eggs on fly larvae; eggs hatch and the larvae burrow into the maggots and kill them.

Various traps are on the market. These are a mechanical means to capture the flies. Some are for livestock to walk through and flies get trapped in screens, some employ sticky surfaces, while others use attractants.

The more traditional approach is chemical, such as sprays, rubs, dusters, ear tags, and feed through products. If you use chemical control options, some may kill beneficial insects as well. Resistance has developed to some of these products, too. Make sure you read label directions for each product.

This is an overview of the 3 flies and a short look at control. There are a lot of resources for livestock on the Cornell Integrated Pest Management website, found here: <u>https://nysipm.cornell.edu/agriculture/livestock-and-field</u> <u>-crops/</u>. As always, give me a call or drop me an email if you would like to learn more about this topic. Ryan is an AEM certified Environmental Planner and CCA certified Crop Consultant.

Ryan uses his experience and commitment to the agriculture community to help his clients navigate challenging regulatory guidelines. Part of this challenge is helping farms use manure to meet their regulatory needs while maximizing crop yields. Ryan believes in farming, and so we.





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Forage Quality and Economic Efficiency Depend on Timing

by Margaret Quaassdorff

Corn grain prices are projected to be near \$6.00 per bushel in our region, and soybean meal is up \$100.00 per ton since last summer. One strategy to combat high grain prices is feeding lower starch diets (ie. higher forage diets) along with less costly high fiber byproducts. With purchased feeds increasing in price, it is even more important this year to pay attention to the quality of our forages in order to be able to provide the most digestible nutrients to our cows with the investments that we have already made.

From a nutrition perspective, rumen microbes do not have a requirement for starch. Rather, they have a requirement for energy which may come in the form of fermentable carbohydrates like digestible neutral detergent fiber (NDF), soluble fiber, sugars, and yes, starch. First cut will be starting soon in our region, and when it comes to forage quality, maximizing NDF digestibility (NDFd) is key. NDFd can be manipulated with harvest time management, and greatly impacts the amount of dry matter a cow can consume, as well as microbial protein production in the rumen. Better microbial protein production indicates a high-functioning rumen, and helps drive milk and component production. A recent study by Miner Institute showed that we can maintain microbial protein production and feed higher forage diets without losing energy corrected milk as long as the forage contains highly digestible NDF.

So how do we ensure that we are harvesting a high quality haylage with highly digestible NDF?

Both alfalfa and grass, or a combination, have the potential to be a very highly digestible NDF forage source, but each has different management considerations to get it to that point. Maturity of each species in the crop and seasonal growing conditions are where we want to focus our attention. Typically, as the crops grow taller and mature the NDF portion of the plant increases, but the digestible percentage of the NDF decreases. This is why we do not only shoot for the highest yield when harvesting forage targeted for our high producing cows. In a Cornell study comparing the first cutting growth of grass and alfalfa levels of NDF and NDFd were constant until around May 10th, at which time NDF levels began a linear increase while NDFd decreased. By May 30th, NDF had increased by 20-25% while NDFd declined by 15-20% for both grass and alfalfa.

Our goal as producers and nutritionists is to harvest our haycrop forage when the NDFd is close to 70%. Consider this example from the May 2018 issue of Miner Institute's *Farm Report*:

Imagine a 1400-pound dairy cow eating a diet with a forage blend of 25% alfalfa (40% NDF) and 75% grass (55% NDF). When the 48-hr NDF digestibility of the grass is only 60%, then cows producing about 90 lb./day of milk can eat 52 lb/day of a diet containing just 54% forage. But, when the NDF digestibility increases to 76% because of earlier harvest, then the dietary forage percentage can increase to 63% while maintaining high feed intake and milk production.

According to Cornell's Jerry Cherney, the height of alfalfa can predict when it and grass fields should be cut. He recommends to cut pure grass when alfalfa is 13 inches tall, and to wait until the alfalfa is 23 inches tall to cut a 50:50 mixed stand. The key here is not to wait until the alfalfa itself is at its optimum to cut mixed stands, otherwise the grass will become overly mature, and will limit dry matter intake and milk production. For more information on this, and to find optimum harvest time for your own fields based on species mix and spring conditions, read the Cornell article: <u>Time to Check the Progress of Your First Cutting</u> available online at <u>https:// tinyurl.com/Forage-Management</u>.



Alfalfa harvest. Photo by: M. Stanyard / CCE NWNY Team

Upcoming Webinars

May 10, 2021 - Noon (CST)

"Capturing full value for Holstein and crossbred steers" Dan Schaefer, University of Wisconsin-Madison https://hoards.com/flex-309-Webinars.html

June 14, 2021 - Noon (CST)

"What consumers believe about animal care" Nina von Keyserlink, University of British Columbia https://hoards.com/flex-309-Webinars.html

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Jeff is a Dairy Records Service Manager. He is also one of the 125 people we have working on farms throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions.

Jeff is passionate about helping farms reach their quality and production goals with DHI record services. He works with his farms to develop a plan that will help them find success in a way that works for their business. Jeff believes in farming, and so do we.



Protect Your Farm Business - Get Vaccinated for COVID-19

by Joan Sinclair Petzen

Mid-sized and small farm businesses who rely primarily on family with a limited additional workforce may be among the businesses most vulnerable if a working member of the family were to have a severe case of COVID-19. Impacts of the virus range from few to mild symptoms to illness requiring extended hospital stays or death. Right here in our WNY community most everyone knows someone who has experienced a rough go with a case. We now have the tools to prevent catastrophic consequences of the COVID-19 virus in the form of vaccines; use them.

Of particular concern is the impact this illness could have on businesses, who lack backup help for when someone is sick or injured. Are you the farmer who "does it all himself" or has a very small tight group of family that perform all the operations of the business? What would happen to your business if one of the family workforce were unavailable for a couple of weeks or more? Could that spell disaster for your business?

COVID-19 vaccines are available and approved for use on an emergency basis by the United States Food and Drug Administration. The COVID-19 vaccines, similarly to other vaccines given to children or the annual flu shot, in some cases cause some short-term ill feelings while the person's body builds the antibodies to be able to fight if the actual disease comes knocking. Think about babies that are cranky for a day or two after their shots. Short-term side effects at vaccination are certainly minor compared to a full-blown case of COVID-19.

Learn more about the COVID-19 vaccinations from local medical professionals at the Finger Lakes Community Health (FLCH) by listening to a short video with questions and answers from the agricultural community. View the video either in English or Spanish at: <u>https://tinyurl.com/COVID-19-Vaccine-Farmworkers</u>. The Cornell Farmworker Program's collaboration with FLCH to bring current information about the vaccines and how they work.

In agriculture, we strive every day to reduce the risks involved in operating a business dependent upon biological systems. We rotate crops to prevent disease or insect pest infestations. We vaccinate livestock to prevent disease. We disinfect food handling facilities to prevent the transfer of pathogens. Everyone, in consultation with their medical advisor, should seriously consider COVID-19 vaccination as an opportunity to reduce the risk of a catastrophic illness among the key family members and employees to protect their business from the devastating impact of preventable illness or death.

Alton Rudgers Shares His COVID-19 Experience

A healthy young Attica man in his twenties, Alton shared his dreadful experience with COVID-19. Upon not feeling well, Alton tested positive around Veteran's Day in November. He spent a week in isolation with symptoms like a bad flu: severe headache, cough, sore throat, fatigue and finally a loss of



taste. He was released from isolation following another week of severe fatigue and returned to work.

Following Thanksgiving, which Alton spent with his family, he had severe back pain, unlike anything he had experienced before. He decided to go to the emergency room. Immediately, he was admitted to the hospital with pneumonia and blood clots in his lungs, complications not uncommon from COVID-19. The pain was so unyielding that he frequently found himself begging the nurses for more heavy pain medication. The relentless headaches returned during his four-day hospitalization. His breathing became so shallow and difficult at times that he was unable to skip a breath to take a drink. Intravenous fluids became necessary for hydration.

Upon release from the hospital, Alton continued to feel heavy fatigue for 6 to 8 weeks. He found he would be able to get up and begin work around 7 am but by 10 or 11 am was so tired he required a nap until 2 or 3 pm when he would continue his day's work and be ready for bed by 8 pm. For anyone who knows Alton, and his normal energy, the fatigue really cramped his style. Alton continues to take blood thinner medication and be closely monitored by his doctor. He expects that will continue for a few more months.

When asked about how he feels about vaccination against COVID-19, Alton commented, "When I become eligible, I plan to discuss my immunity status with my doctor. If the doctor recommends a vaccination and I am not preventing others who are more vulnerable than I from receiving the vaccine, I will get vaccinated." Agriculturalists, particularly dairy and livestock producers understand how vaccines work and use them regularly on the farm. Alton closed our conversation by saying, "For our community to achieve herd immunity and interact with one another without fear of becoming sick or worse, people need to get vaccinated if they are able."



Spring Crop Comments by Mike Stanyard

The Importance of Utilizing Pheromone Traps to Monitor Armyworm and Cutworm Moths

Common armyworm (CAW) and black cutworm (BCW) are two very important pests that invade New York every spring. These two moths do not overwinter here and arrive on stormfronts coming up from the southern US. This means that our winter weather has no affect on the moth populations that we may see each year. This is why it is so important to monitor the first arrival of these moths and how many are taking up residence here. Both of these moths are active at night so we never see them flying around. That is what makes pheromone traps such an effective monitoring tool.

We put out six CAW and six BCW pheromone traps out across NWNY in early April. These green bucket traps have a pheromone lure which attracts only the male moths. The traps are checked weekly for the first arrival and more importantly when a significant number of moths arrives at one time (9 over a 2-day period). Once this number is caught, we calculate the number of degree-day units (Base 50°F) accumulated each day. It takes roughly 300 degree-days for BCW larvae to be big enough to cut corn plants (4th instar). This is not a scientific process but it gives us a good idea of when we should be out there scouting for signs of crop injury. We will be sending out weekly catch numbers on our team blog (*see page 2 for blog details*).

How Do you Determine if your Wheat Has Reached Feekes Stage 6?

Feekes stage 6 is a very important stage to identify. This is officially the stem elongation or jointing stage. This is the stage where all of your nitrogen should now be applied (first shot or second shot). I know a lot of early N went out this year and it looked like the wheat responded beautifully. To determine if you are at FS 6, pull up a couple of primary tillers. Peel down the lower leaves like you were peeling a banana and expose the shiny lower stem. If you can see a visible bump or node (like the knuckle on your finger), then you are at FS 6 (see pic*ture*). The tiny spikelet is developing right above this first node. The number of kernels is already developed. You can cut the stem vertically and see for yourself. It usually takes 7 days to reach FS 7, which is the emergence of the 2nd node. FS 8 is the first emergence of the flag leaf and that takes another 7 to 10 days. As things get heated up, we will run through these stages quickly!

Are Nematodes Feeding on your Corn?

If you attended our virtual Corn Congress back in January, I gave a presentation titled, "Are Corn Nematodes Robbing your Corn Yield?".

A survey of plant parasitic nematodes feeding on corn has not been pursued in NY. Many corn growing states in the Midwest such as Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio have recently done statewide surveys in corn. Iowa has identified at least 12 nematode species that are feeding on corn roots. It is very important to know which species are present to justify the extra economic expense of a management option. Many of these states have also found some of the worst nematode species in soils that are lighter and have a higher sand content. We have plenty of those soils in NY.

I have received funding through the NY Corn & Soybean Growers Association to sample 50 fields this summer. One of the main goals of this survey is to identify which species of nematode are present and feeding on corn roots in NY. The second goal is to determine what kind of populations are present for each species. Many states have established economic thresholds for many of these nematodes. Some are as low as 1 per sample while others are above 1,000. If you have had areas in a corn field that have had symptoms such as stunting, yellow patches, or poor root growth, and you can't figure out the cause, nematodes might be the issue. Give me a call and you can be part of NY nematode survey.



The nodes are the darker green areas on the stem. Photo by: M. Stanyard / CCE NWNY Team

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Livingston County NWNY Dairy, Livestock & Field Crops Team 3 Murray Hill Drive Mount Morris, NY 14510

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>> UPCOMING EVENTS <<

Pricing Your Meat Products Webinar - May 5, 2021 from 7:00 to 8:00pm. Nancy Glazier and Joan Petzen will continue with the topic of selling meat products. We had great discussion last month with interest in meeting the first Wednesday of the month. We will have a short presentation and time for group discussion. Registration is not required. Join the meeting at : https://tinyurl.com/Pricing-Meat-Products

Save the Date

Empire Farm Days - August 3-4-5, 2021. Tues. 9-4, Wed. 9-4, Thur. 9-3 at Palladino Farms - Heritage Hill Brewhouse 3149 Sweet Road, Pompey, NY 13138. For more information visit: www.empirefarmdays.com

with Cornell Cooperative Extension Regional Dairy Specialists and Cornell CALS PRO-DAIRY

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COVID-19 Information Websites:

Need information? View the following Cornell CALS and CCE Resource Pages that are updated regularly.

General Questions & Links: https://eden.cce.cornell.edu/

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Food Production, Processing & Safety Questions: https://instituteforfoodsafety.cornell.edu/coronavirus-covid-19/

Employment & Agricultural Workforce Questions: http://agworkforce.cals.cornell.edu/

Cornell Small Farms Resiliency Resources: https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/resources/farm-resilience/

Financial & Mental Health Resources for Farmers: https://www.nyfarmnet.org/

Cornell Farmworker Program www.farmworkers.cornell.edu | www.trabajadores.cornell.edu (en espanol)

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