

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Central New York Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops

Field Crop Update May 2, 2025

1. Field Observations
2. First Cutting Forage Quality
3. Growing Degree Days (*coming soon*)
4. Pest monitoring (*coming soon*)

1. Field Observations

Welcome back! If you're new to our mailing list, each week I distribute this newsletter to update the agricultural community of what's happening in our 8-county region with regards to field conditions, insect pests, diseases, and weed monitoring, and cropping activities in field crops (grains and forages).

I've seen a few fields planted with corn and soybeans, but I anticipate many more acres to be planted after this rainy stretch subsides. Winter grains are looking fantastic so far, so hopefully growers have been able to make the necessary weed control and fertilizer applications. Alfalfa and grass hay crops are chugging along, so with that in mind...:

This time of year, the CNY regional Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops team measures the heights of alfalfa crops to inform farmers of how near their field may be to peak yield and quality. We use alfalfa heights to estimate NDF and predicted harvest date. Most fields are still too short to predict harvest date, but keep in mind that **if alfalfa is 10" tall, nearby grass crops are very close to peak maturity for dairy!**

2. First Cutting Forage Quality

Alfalfa height is a reliable indicator of NDF values in the field, so we use alfalfa height to predict Neutral Detergent Fiber (NDF) for alfalfa, mixed alfalfa/grass, and pure grass stands. When using alfalfa and grass height as an indicator of NDF content, in general:

Begin cutting 100% grass stands when nearby alfalfa is 14" tall to achieve the desired 50% NDF.

Begin cutting 50/50 alfalfa/grass stands when nearby alfalfa is 22" tall for the desired 44% NDF.

Begin cutting 100% alfalfa stands when alfalfa is 28" tall for the desired 40% NDF.

To achieve the desired NDF it is necessary to **begin cutting at NDF values slightly lower than the desired value** assuming some harvest and storage losses (which the above alfalfa height values reflect). For example 28 inch tall alfalfa is closer to 38% NDF but you will need to start then to end up at 40% NDF.

Predicted days to cut are based on daily NDF increases for grasses (1%), 50/50 mixed stands of (0.8%), and alfalfa (0.5%). Typically, NDF increases about 0.8 to 1.2/day for grasses and 0.4 to 0.7/day in alfalfa, expecting the lower end of that range in cooler weather and the higher end in warm. See the following fact sheet for more details: [Predicting Spring Fiber Content of Forages](#).

Always check your fields to verify your heights and conditions! Remember that these predicted harvest dates are *not* set in stone, and will fluctuate as we go along. And they may creep up on us - especially since the fields are getting a lot of moisture now, and the temperature is only going up!

*Locations and heights **AS OF May 2, 2025**:*

5/2/2025					Estimated % NDF			Predicted Date to cut:		
County	Town	Road	Elev (ft)	Alfalfa ht (in)	100% Grass	50/50 Mix	100% Alfalfa	100% Grass	50/50 Mix	100% Alfalfa
Chenango	Bainbridge	Ives Sttlmnt Rd	1660	7	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Chenango	Greene	Co Rd 32	950	11	46.5076	33.6596	26.2	5/5/25	5/14/25	5/25/25
Chenango	New Berlin	Next week....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Chenango	Oxford	NY-12	984	9	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Chenango	Sherburne	NY-80	1150	8	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Herkimer	Columbia	Osley Rd	1550	4	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Herkimer	Danube	Paradise Rd	711	8	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Herkimer	German Flts	Kingdom Rd	1485	4	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Herkimer	Warren	NY- 167	1400	5	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Madison	Eaton	Mo'ville 31RRLH	1392	7	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Madison	Eaton	Mo'ville 38RR	1392	6	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Madison	Fenner	Cody Rd	1467	7	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Madison	Madison	Lk Moraine Rd	1175	7	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Madison	Nelson	Eaton Brook Rd	1576	5	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Madison	Oneida	Middle Rd	551	9	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early

5/2/2025					Estimated % NDF			Predicted Date to cut:		
County	Town	Road	Elev (ft)	Alfalfa ht (in)	100% Grass	50/50 Mix	100% Alfalfa	100% Grass	50/50 Mix	100% Alfalfa
Madison	Smithfield	St'bridge Fls Rd	1119	8	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Madison	Sullivan	Clock Rd	821	10	45.644	32.796	25.5	5/6/25	5/16/25	5/27/25
Madison	Sullivan	Tuscarora Rd	433	11	46.5076	33.6596	26.2	5/5/25	5/14/25	5/25/25
Montgomery	Amsterdam	Pattersonville Rd	460	11	46.5076	33.6596	26.2	5/5/25	5/14/25	5/25/25
Montgomery	Amsterdam	Next week....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Montgomery	Florida	Cemetery Drive	566	10	45.644	32.796	25.5	5/6/25	5/16/25	5/27/25
Montgomery	Florida	Youngs Crns Rd	692	11	46.5076	33.6596	26.2	5/5/25	5/14/25	5/25/25
Montgomery	Glen	Co Hwy 117	612	9	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Montgomery	Glen	Scott Rd	531	7	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Montgomery	Minden	Dutchtown Rd	816	6	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Otsego	Cooperstown	County Rd 43	1233	9	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Otsego	Gilbertsville	NY-51	1111	12	47.3712	34.5232	26.9	5/4/25	5/13/25	5/24/25
Otsego	Hartwick	205	1197	8	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Otsego	Laurens	Next week....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Otsego	Mt Upton	Next week....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Otsego	Richfield	Prey Hill Rd	1245	8	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Saratoga	Charlton	Dawson Rd	505	6	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Saratoga	Charlton	Jockey St	492	7	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Saratoga	N'umberland	Callahan Rd	276	12	47.3712	34.5232	26.9	5/4/25	5/13/25	5/24/25
Saratoga	N'umberland	Lindsay Rd	310	11	46.5076	33.6596	26.2	5/5/25	5/14/25	5/25/25
Saratoga	N'umberland	Williams Lane	238	8	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Saratoga	Saratoga	Southard Rd.	324	10	45.644	32.796	25.5	5/6/25	5/16/25	5/27/25
Saratoga	Saratoga	Rte 70	Next	Week....	...	...	...	...	...	...
Saratoga	Saratoga	State Rte 29	207	9	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early

5/2/2025					<i>Estimated % NDF</i>			<i>Predicted Date to cut:</i>		
County	Town	Road	Elev (ft)	Alfalfa ht (in)	100% Grass	50/50 Mix	100% Alfalfa	100% Grass	50/50 Mix	100% Alfalfa
Saratoga	Stillwater	County Rte 423	400	5	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Saratoga	Stillwater	Sweet Rd	470	9	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Saratoga	W Charlton	Sacandaga Rd	666	10	45.644	32.796	25.5	5/6/25	5/16/25	5/27/25
Saratoga	W Charlton	Sacandaga Rd	693	9	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Schoharie	Cobleskill	Lake Road	1337	12.5	47.803	34.955	27.25	5/4/25	5/13/25	5/23/25
Schoharie	Cobleskill	W'ville Cutoff	865	12	47.3712	34.5232	26.9	5/4/25	5/13/25	5/24/25
Schoharie	Gallupville	NY 443	689	12	47.3712	34.5232	26.9	5/4/25	5/13/25	5/24/25
Schoharie	Middleburgh	State Route 30	609	13	48.2348	35.3868	27.6	5/3/25	5/12/25	5/22/25
Schoharie	Sharon Spr	Keller Road	1417	8	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Schoharie	Wright	Abrams Rd	1115	12.5	47.803	34.955	27.25	5/4/25	5/13/25	5/23/25

*Alfalfa measured by Daniela Gonzalez, Ashley McFarland, and Erik Smith

If your location is not listed but you know the height of your alfalfa, this chart is for you. As of MAY 2, 2025, if your alfalfa is:

If YOUR Alfalfa	Est. % NDF			Predicted Date to Cut		
is (inches):	100% Grass	50/50 Mix	100% Alfalfa	100% Grass	50/50 Mix	100% Alfalfa
9	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
10	45.644	32.796	25.5	5/6/25	5/16/25	5/27/25
11	46.5076	33.6596	26.2	5/5/25	5/14/25	5/25/25
12	47.3712	34.5232	26.9	5/4/25	5/13/25	5/24/25
13	48.2348	35.3868	27.6	5/3/25	5/12/25	5/22/25
14	49.0984	36.2504	28.3	5/2/25	5/11/25	5/21/25
15	49.962	37.114	29	5/2/25	5/10/25	5/20/25

See you in the field!