

## 1<sup>st</sup> Cutting Forage Quality Update

We have begun our monitoring of 1<sup>st</sup> cutting for quality this year. Certainly the spring of 2012 has presented some interesting growing conditions. At various times during the growing season temperatures have been unseasonably warm or cold. Alfalfa in particular has been affected by some very low nighttime temperatures and frosts and grasses in particular have had reduced growth due to dry soil conditions.

Because of the unusual weather those of you who have received this information in the past may see the attached table and realize we are approaching things differently this year. We have traditionally used alfalfa height to predict NDF content for alfalfa and grasses. It was efficient for us to stop at alfalfa fields and get a quick read on what the predicted NDFs, either grass or alfalfa, were at that local. This year we have a concern given the unusual weather that the alfalfa height and grass NDF may not line up as well at all locations so we are using equations that allow us to predict NDF from the height of orchardgrass and reed canarygrass directly.

Most locations have alfalfa and grass height measurements, but a few only have grass and some only alfalfa so you may see blank spaces in the tables. At many locations the alfalfa is really too short to fit the equations, under 13 inches, so you see "Too Early" indicated. If you want to do it yourself check <http://www.forages.org/joomla/index.php/tools> for Excel spreadsheets that will make predictions of current NDF content in the field from your own measurements. Our feeling is that many times these calculations are within the error of scissor cut or grab sample results sent to a lab.

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

Begin cutting 100% orchardgrass stands when they are 19 inches tall and 100% reed canary grass stands when they are 21 inches tall for the desired 50% NDF. In general we say 100% grass stands should be cut when nearby alfalfa is 14 inches tall to achieve the desired 50% NDF.

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

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

The desired NDF for all grass fields is 50%, 50/50 mixed alfalfa and grass fields is 44%, and pure alfalfa stands is 40%. Predicted days to cut are based on daily NDF increases for grasses of 1% point, 50/50 mixed stands of .8% points and alfalfa of .5% point. Typically NDF increases about 0.8 to 1.2/day for grasses expecting the lower end of that range in cooler weather and the higher end in warm. Alfalfa NDF increases about 0.4 to 0.7/day again figuring the lower end of that range with cool temperatures and the higher in warm. Predictions are adjusted for the coming week's weather and right now we are assuming normal growth.

**Although most locations are far from harvest, some lower elevation southern valleys may have orchardgrass ready to harvest momentarily!  
As always use information in the attached table as a guide to know when to harvest by checking your fields! Next report May 9!**

Summary of Alfalfa Height and Prediction of % NDF - May 1, 2012

County	Town	Road Name	Elevation	Grass Height Inches	Grass Species	Predicted Grass % NDF	Predicted Date to Cut Grass	Alfalfa Height Inches	Predicted Alfalfa % NDF	Predicted Date to Cut Alfalfa	Predicted 50/50 Mix % NDF	Predicted Date to Cut Mix
Chenango	Bainbridge	Ives Settlement Road	1400					4	Too Early			
Chenango	Brisban	State Route 12	919	11	Orchardgrass	39.3	5/11/12	5	Too Early			
Chenango	New Berlin	County Road 18	1109	11	Reed Canarygrass	39.3	5/11/12	8	Too Early			
Chenango	Nineveh	County Road 26	966	10	Orchardgrass	38.1	5/12/12	7	Too Early			
Chenango	Oxford	County Road 32	1030	10	Orchardgrass	38.1	5/12/12	6	Too Early			
Chenango	Oxford	State Route 220	1509	10	Orchardgrass	38.1	5/12/12					
Chenango	Sidney	St Hwy 8	980	9	Orchardgrass	37.0	5/14/12	11	Too Early			
Chenango	Smyrna	County Road 12B	1268					7	Too Early			
Chenango	South Oxford	County Road 32	956	11	Orchardgrass	39.3	5/11/12	8	Too Early			
Herkimer	Columbia	Jordanville Road	1586					6	Too Early			
Herkimer	Danube	Cramer Road	693	14	Orchardgrass	42.9	5/9/12	13	27.6	6/4/12	35.4	5/13/12
Herkimer	German Flatts	Robinson Road	1372					8	Too Early			
Herkimer	Norway	Elm Tree Road	1123					6	Too Early			
Herkimer	Schulyer	Minots Corners Road	716	13	Orchardgrass	41.7	5/11/12	9	Too Early			
Herkimer	Winfield	North Winfield Road	1243					8	Too Early			
Madison	Brookfield	State Route 8	1195					9	Too Early			
Madison	Cazenovia	East Road	1421					9	Too Early			
Madison	Fenner	Cody Road	1482					8	Too Early			
Madison	Georgetown	State Route 26	1374	6	Reed Canarygrass	30.6	5/20/12	6	Too Early			
Madison	Hamilton	Eaton Street	1118	6	Reed Canarygrass	30.0	5/20/12	7	Too Early			
Madison	Lebanon	River Road	1114					7	Too Early			
Madison	Lebanon	Jantzen Road	1378					8	Too Early			
Madison	Madison	Center Road	1342	7	Reed Canarygrass	32.2	5/18/12	7	Too Early			
Madison	Smithfield	Gill Road	1311					10	Too Early			

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Madison	Sullivan	Quarry Rd.	602					15	29.0	5/19/12	37.1	5/9/12
Otsego	Cherry Valley	County Road 32A	787	15	Orchardgrass	44.1	5/6/12	15	29.0	5/19/12	37.1	5/9/12
Otsego	Cherry Valley	County Road 32	1105	12	Reed Canarygrass	40.5	5/10/12					
Otsego	Cooperstown	County Road 33	1532	8	Orchardgrass	35.8	5/15/12	6	Too Early			
Otsego	Garrettsville	State Route 51	1254	7	Orchardgrass	34.6	5/16/12	5	Too Early			
Otsego	Otego	State Route 7	1072	9	Orchardgrass	37.0	5/14/12	6	Too Early			
Otsego	Plainfield	County Road 18	1118	9	Orchardgrass	37.0	5/17/12	9	Too Early			
Otsego	Portlandville	County Road 35	1200	7	Orchardgrass	34.6	5/16/12	5	Too Early			
Otsego	Richfield	State Route 20	1712					4	Too Early			
Otsego	Springfield	Briar Hill Road	1520	9	Orchardgrass	37.0	5/14/12	7	Too Early			
Schoharie	Fulton	St Rt 30/Church Street	668	16	Orchardgrass	45.3	5/5/12	15	29.0	5/19/12	37.1	5/9/12
Schoharie	Fulton	W. Middleburgh Road	1032	14	Orchardgrass	42.9	5/8/12					
Schoharie	Fulton	State Route 30	685	19	Orchardgrass	48.9	5/2/12	16	29.7	5/17/12	38.0	5/8/12
Schoharie	Middleburgh	Amelia Lane	631	16	Orchardgrass	45.3	5/5/12	15	29.0	5/19/12	37.1	5/9/12
Schoharie	Richmondville	Warnerville Cutoff	953	14	Orchardgrass	42.9	5/8/12	12	Too Early			
Schoharie	Richmondville	Warnerville Cutoff	953	13	Reed Canarygrass	41.7	5/9/12	12	Too Early			
Schoharie	Wright	Abrams Road	1023	13	Reed Canarygrass	41.7	5/9/12	14	28.3	5/20/12	36.3	5/10/12
Schoharie	Wright	Abrams Road	1023	17	Orchardgrass	46.5	5/4/12	14	28.3	5/20/12	36.3	5/10/12

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