



ADVANCED AG SYSTEMS'

Crop Soil News

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**"It is the crops
that feed the
cows that make
the milk
which creates
the money."**

Advanced Ag Systems
Research, Education, Consulting

And The Struggle Goes On

Not good news. The cool (cold in some areas) and wet is slated to continue. Europe is having some of the same conditions with winter snows still coming down in low elevations and southern areas. The concern is that the weather is due to the sunspot output going into a major naturally occurring decline. When this happens, the magnetic sphere (a magnetic envelope extending from the sun out covering the earth as it were) shrinks. This allows intergalactic rays to bombard the earth. These rays are at very high levels now. They produce clouds. Clouds do two things. First, they reflect heat from the sun away from the earth, cooling it. Second, clouds produce rainfall. We have had both. Neither have anything to do with political climate change. This has happened before during the "little ice ages" in Europe during the late middle ages (1500-1800,) and the dark ages (300-500). There was widespread crop failure and subsequent famines. Will it be that bad again? I don't know but the real weather scientists are starting to say it is following the same weather pattern in this sun spot minimum.

What can you do? First, pray. God is still in charge, always listens, and replies but not always as we expect. Second, adjust your cropping system to counter the weather patterns. An old saying is "A drought will scare a farmer to death, a flood will starve him".

On the good news (cropping – the other good news!!) winter forages should have very high digestibility due to the cool and cold nights that we have been experiencing. Thus, if you are weather delayed in harvest, don't give up the crop (we don't know what the rest of the summer will be like). Even if the heads are starting to emerge, harvest it as a regular crop. Then if the summer turns out perfect you can move it to dry cows and heifers. If the summer continues like this spring, you will have forage for dairy herd. The other advantage where farms had been able to get winter forage planted last fall, is that there is 60% less moisture under a winter forage than under a bare soil. This allows no-till/strip till corn planting much sooner. A wet spring in early 2000, a farmer reported the only ground he could get on and harvest was winter forage. He then spread manure on the stubble and planted corn. Then he waited for the rest of the farm to dry out.

A day or two after the winter forage is ready for harvest (flag leaf), the cool season grasses will be ready to harvest. The early grasses we discussed pushing with nitrogen and sulfur in April, love this type of weather. You can get tremendous crops in repeated cuttings with this pattern. If you have not been able to get on the field until now, I would still put the fertilizer on up to a week before mowing. You will probably not change yield but could boost the crude protein (save on soybean meal). Liquid nitrogen + sulfur applied with



They have measured 60% less moisture under a winter forage crop. This plus the root mass allows a planter to no till corn immediately after harvest. A clearing coulter or strip till is suggested for a clear seed bed and no allelopathic effects from the winter forage stubble.

stream bars may get in faster if you have that equipment already set up. As soon as you harvest the grass – re-fertilize with nitrogen and sulfur for the next crop. Remember grass needs to be mowed at 4 inch cutter bar height or else there will not be another cutting. Again, that early 2000 very wet summer, a farmer I worked with had extensive grass on heavy soils. He kept cutting and immediately fertilizing the only ground he could harvest. In spite of harvesting only half of his acreage he had a full complement of haylage at the end of the wet season.

This is turning out to be one of those years where the **most economical move will be to harvest haylage first and then plant corn after.** Haylage loses quality by the day. Corn loses yield over several weeks. Corn planted later will naturally shorten its maturity to a degree and can still produce 95% of the normal yield. The other reason to wait on the corn is that some of the worst yield robbing compaction is caused by the planter and its tractor. Those who win yield contests nearly all wait until soil conditions are right. Planting too soon smears and compacts the soil so the corn roots can't penetrate. The soil when it dries can pull open the slot allowing weather and pests to take out the seedling. The other concern this year is imbibing injury. A rapid temperature drop chills the seed as it absorbs water (imbibing). This can kill the seed. I have experienced it on both corn and sorghum. Consider no-till. You only need the top 4 inches friable to plant not 7-8 inches as with tillage. You can get more corn no-till planted in less time by waiting for the right conditions.

For winter forage, cool season grasses, and alfalfa, if you are not using wide swath same day haylage techniques, this is the year to start. We are only getting one day burst of nice sunny weather. In western NY it was reported that they have not had three sunny days in a row since last August. If it takes two days to make haylage it is going to get rained on the second day. Using wide swath with its photosynthetic drying, moisture can be dropped to ensiling levels the same day it is mowed. Sunlight hitting the plant (even after it is mowed) will take CO₂ and the water in the plant to make carbohydrate and rapidly dry the plant. Wide swath is mowing at swath width that is at least 80% of cutterbar. If your mower cannot do that then ted immediately after you finish mowing to expose as much of the vegetation as possible. You can see the basics of this in the video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWaQzISMn3E> There are other videos if you search by my name or Wide Swath.

With the questionable drying conditions of high humidity, wet soil, and frequent clouds, even the experienced wide swathers are now utilizing tedders. This is especially true for winter forage and heavy grass cuttings. Mow wide and two hours after mowing ted the crop to bring up the lower layers and spread it to 100% of the field. Watch your forward speed of the tedder tractor. If you go too fast you will not loosen the crop but rather make tedder lumps that will NOT dry. A farmer near Syracuse NY bought a 40 foot tedder (110 cow operation) and he said it clearly made the difference between getting the crop in or getting it rained on. He reported all his neighbors wanted to use it, and he ended up custom tedding 1200 acres. Normally wide swath does not need to be teded (except for winter forage or first cut red clover) but this is NOT normal weather. With the cloudy conditions we expect the energy, the sugars for fermentation, and possibly the digestibility of the haylage first cutting to be lower. Wide swath can be a huge help but not as much in negative plant energy weather (cloudy).



Tedding is normally needed two hours after mowing winter forage or red clover. With the cloudy conditions limiting photosynthetic drying, and the humid conditions, use of tedders on more than first cutting may be necessary to get the crop in the same day it is mowed. There is very little leaf loss because wide swath dries the stem first, and the leaves last.

Sincerely,

Thomas Kilcer,
Certified Crop Advisor

172 Sunnyside Rd
Kinderhook, NY
12106

Tel: 518-421-2132

tfk1@cornell.edu

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to Better
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