



ADVANCED AG SYSTEMS'

Crop Soil News

<http://www.advancedagsys.com/>

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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

Season Compression

In the north-central and northeast half of the US, the season is shaping up more and more as one of the springs where we go from winter to summer in less than a week. Snow one day, short sleeve shirts two days later. The longer-term forecast just a week ago had this region as colder and wetter than normal. The forecast has now been changed to hot and dry. The supreme irony is that by the middle of May we will probably be at average growing degree days. This will mean that the manure that couldn't get spread because it was too wet, the corn that couldn't get planted because it was too cold and wet, and the winter forage and haylage that was growing very slowly, will all switch to "need to be done now!"

You can't do all three at once, so what do you do. As we mentioned in the last letter, the only step that changes drastically in profitability with time during May (growing degree days) is the **winter forage and haylage**. When they are ready there is nothing more important or will have a bigger impact on the profitability of your production than getting the haylage in as high-quality forage. Profitability drop can be measured in days.

Winter forage is ready first and drops the fastest. With the high temperatures forecasted in a week, you need to be ready to roll as soon as the sun is out. With normal temperatures, it goes from stage 8 to optimum stage 9 in about 5 days. With high temperatures, it will only take half of that. If you have extensive acreage, the normal planting season will spread the maturity. For every week you delayed planting in the fall the crop will reach maturity 2 days later. Thus harvesting your fields in the order that you planted will allow you to get it all in as top quality. If you get very high temperatures (above 90 if it gets that far) will drive all the winter grains to a rapid heading. Thus, you may need to start harvesting at stage 8 on some fields so that the last you harvest will not be much past stage 9 if you want milk cow forage. If nights remain cold you could still harvest at the early head and have high quality. Because it is the date of planting and temperature-driven, each location needs to be judged individually.

If you are trying to get haylage done in order to get manure injected and corn planted, we strongly suggest you use the wide swath same-day haylage practice as described in [May 2021](#) newsletter (click to open). This both increases forage quality reaching the mouth of the cow, while simultaneously giving you more days of nice weather to speed the crop harvest.

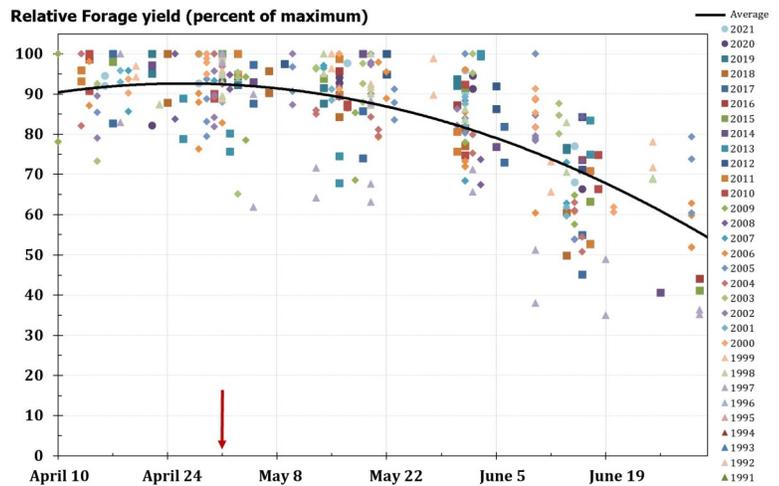
As mentioned in [April](#) (click to open) newsletter, as soon as the winter forage is harvested it is time to start harvesting the intensively



Wide swath same day haylage speeds the harvest of both winter forage and alfalfa haylage.

managed straight grass fields. The alfalfa grass fields are next starting with those that have the highest percentage of grass, finishing with straight alfalfa. NDFd for alfalfa drops 1%/day (grass drops faster) when you go past optimum harvest. That represents **.55 lbs. of milk/cow/day**. Every day you delay you lose money.

Not so with corn silage. The corn may be a bigger crop and more important in farmer's minds, but a delay in planting in order to get haylage, has very little impact on quality and quantity. The rest of the season is a major driver of quality. As you can see by the graph at right from **Dr. Joe Lauer, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison**, you can go well into late May and still get nearly all the yield possible. A number of years even planting into early June did not reduce corn silage yields. This was also true for the grain content. His data is especially critical today because so much of the early season was not conducive to growing corn. An added factor is one that most agronomists have seen all too often. Where farmers panicked and mudded the crop in they took a **huge yield loss and quality loss** from low grain production. Waiting until the soil is at the correct friability to plant, even with a significant delay, will produce a higher-yielding crop with higher grain than the mudded in one. I have seen horribly compacted fields from the corn planter and the planter tractor. Wait until the soil is ready.



Dr. J Lauer, University of Wisconsin– Madison corn silage yields. This encompasses a wide range of seasonal effects.

The sum of the season is that when it is time to harvest your haylage or winter forage, there is no other cropping practice on the farm that will give you as much profit as getting it in on time. As you can see above, the corn can wait.

Sincerely,

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Hand
to Better
Agriculture**

