

Extension Crop Update

This newsletter, and previous issues from recent years, can be found on-line at:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/plymouth/info/cropupdate.htm>

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Should I harvest the last alfalfa cutting after the frost? (I have received a lot of these questions lately, so the following is from ISU Forage Specialist Steve Barnhart in a recent ICM News Article)

There is not a simple answer. In general, it will depend whether the frost was a "killing frost" or not. A "killing frost" is not the first light frost of the season; rather, it is a 23 or 24 F degree freeze that lasts for 4 to 6 hours or so.

If the producer does not need the forage, it is best for the alfalfa plants to leave them uncut and standing through the winter.

If it was the hard, killing freeze, and the producer needs the forage, harvest as soon as possible after the freeze to salvage as much of the nutritive value as possible. The longer the delay, the greater the weathering damage and leaf loss from the standing frosted plants.

If the frost were a light, non-killing freeze (like we had last night, Oct. 14), the tops of the alfalfa plants will be visibly damaged but will not likely stop growing for the season. The damaged tops will deteriorate in nutritive quality for the remainder of the autumn, but the plant will still be attempting to regrow from crown buds and will be using stored sugars. The best management for the plant is to allow it to continue to grow using whatever green leaf area it still has until the hard, killing freeze. Then if the producer needs the forage, it can be cut and harvested for hay or silage; or grazed.

Alfalfa plants cut immediately after a partial freeze (non-killing frost) and which experience further normal growing temperatures will start new regrowth from crown buds, using accumulated proteins and carbohydrates that would otherwise be used for overwintering and regrowth the following spring. When these late-recovering plants experience a killing freeze a few days or weeks later, they will be physiologically weaker and more susceptible to winter injury.

For the complete article titled "Fall Frost Effects on Forage," go here: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/CropNews/2008/1006Barnhart.htm>.

Check for Stalk Rot – Prioritize Corn Harvest - We had a wet spring, and really stressed some of these plants to fill. I have seen some fields with a high percentage of marginal stalks – you need to look at yours! Check for stalk rot by pinching the lowest aboveground internode. At least 100 plants scattered throughout the field should be checked. If more than 15 percent of the stalks are rotted (stalks easily crushed), harvest should be scheduled as early as possible to reduce significant losses. There can be some economic trade-off with increased drying costs for early harvested grain, but field scouting is the best guide for potential losses.

Extension Crop Update, continued

Chad Hart – the new ISU Extension Grain Marketing Specialist – Chad Hart has filled the position left open when Bob Wisner retired last winter. Dr. Hart has worked several years in Ames – with CARD (Center for Agricultural and Rural Development). One of the things I like about what Chad has been doing so far is that he is becoming a more frequent contributor to the Integrated Crop News newsletter. He just put two new articles on the web which I think are a good read – the first is titled “Crop Production and Outlook,” and the second is “Crop Production and Outlook – the Demand Side.” Read them – and while you are there, sign up to get the ICM News notices in your e-mail box! The ICM News page can be found here: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/CropNews/2008/>.

Registration is Now Open for Ag Chem Dealer Updates, ICM Conference. The **Ag Chemical Dealer Updates** deliver the latest crop production recommendations, news and information directly from Iowa State University Extension. Each location features updates on weed, insect, crop disease and soil nutrient management brought to you by ISU experts. Meetings will review the positives and negatives of the past growing season and prepare seed, chemical, and fertilizer dealers, crop consultants, farm managers and agronomists for the challenges of the upcoming crop production year. CCA credits and 2008 Commercial Pesticide Continuing Education are available at these meetings. The closest location is Storm Lake on Dec. 16. For details and registration, go here: <http://www.aep.iastate.edu/acu/homepage.html>.

The **Integrated Crop Management Conference** is set for Dec. 10 & 11 in Ames. Choose from over 40 workshops, and see the trade show at the Agribusiness Expo. Up to 13 CCA credits are available, and Commercial Pesticide Certification is available for categories 1A,B,C and 10. Get more details and register at this web site: <http://www.aep.iastate.edu/icm/homepage.html>.

Now's the Time to do Cornstalk N Testing - Corn has reached “black layer,” and as long as cornstalks have not badly deteriorated, we can still pull stalk samples to evaluate N availability from this year. This is a pretty good report card on our N management for the year – but note that soils which were overly wet could give us a confusing answer! N management changes might be in the works for some people – use this test to see if you would have had room for change this past year. Also, although one year of information helps, multiple years of stalk N tests give you a much better picture. Go to this site for Stalk N testing details: <http://www.exnet.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1584.pdf>.

New Manure Nutrient Management Publication Now Available - To help producers make the most of Iowa's available manure nutrient resources, ISU Extension recently released the publication, “Using Manure Nutrients for Crop Production” – found here: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PMR1003.pdf>. The publication has in-depth discussion on managing manure nutrients for crop production - especially manure nutrient characteristics, similarity/differences to fertilizer nutrients, manure nutrient processing in soils, and management practices that can affect nutrient supply and success as a nutrient resource for growing crops. It is a great reference if you are using manure as a source of crop nutrients!

Harvest SAFELY!

"Thanks for Subscribing!"