

# 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>

May 23, 2011

Volume 14, Issue #7



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*Serving Cherokee,  
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**Crop Progress** – We are fortunate in Iowa with how well we have progressed in getting the crop established. Want to see how the progress is rated in other states? Check out the National Ag Statistics [Crop Progress Reports](#) web page. They are usually released on Monday afternoons. We are doing well – not so good in some other states.

Most weather stations in this area show that we are close to normal in growing degree day (GDD) accumulation since late April. Again, you can see local GDD charts at this [ISU weather web page](#). Go to the pull down lists and get a site from near you, and then select the dates you want to review. The top graph compares this year's GDD's to normal, and the bottom compares rainfall to normal.

**Black cutworm larvae** are predicted to be large enough to damage corn now in northern Iowa. I have had a couple of reports of feeding in west central Iowa – late last week. This is the time when you should be watching those emerged corn plants for cutting. Be certain you are not confusing the black cutworms with other caterpillars! Remember that some Bt traits and some seed treatments help reduce damage, but I still recommend watching those fields, too. Check out this ISU ICM Newsletter article on [black cutworms](#). It also links to a spreadsheet that calculates the treatment threshold with today's corn prices and yields – for most examples I looked at, the treatment threshold is now around or below 2% of the plants cut, a little lower than when corn wasn't worth as much!

**Alfalfa Management:** Alfalfa is starting to take off. As this alfalfa gets bigger, growers should closely watch their alfalfa fields to determine readiness for cutting. Cutting at the right stage is important to achieve the desired hay quality that will support growth, weight gain, or lactation. I encourage you to use the PEAQ method to help determine the quality of your alfalfa for the first cutting. See this [PEAQ fact sheet](#), and also see what observers in several Iowa counties are seeing for [estimated relative feed value of standing alfalfa right now](#).

Today I was in two Plymouth County alfalfa fields, and the tallest stem height average was 25". The stems are in the late vegetative stage (although I could feel a couple of buds). **The calculated PEAQ value for these sites would be 185.** Two Sioux County fields I evaluated this morning averaged 22", which would give a **PEAQ RFV of 200.** Variability occurs among neighboring fields and can show differences up to 30 RFV points, so it's important for producers to measure their own crop. Relative feed value drops an average of 3 – 5 points per day. Alfalfa should be around 150 RFV for milking dairy herds, 120 – 130 for heifers, stocker cattle and lactating

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beef cattle. Under the best conditions, 15% of the forage dry matter will be lost at harvest. Therefore it is necessary to cut at 165 – 170 RFV to end up with forage at 150 RFV.

**Replant Decision Aids** – Every year we have a few fields that don't get a good stand established, or something happens to reduce the stand to the point where a replant decision needs to be made. Here is an aid for this decision from ISU Corn Specialist Roger Elmore, titled "[Replant Checklist](#)." The yield potential for corn is now dropping quite rapidly.

Soybean yield potential still remains quite high compared to a full yield. I use this publication, titled [Soybean Replant Decisions](#), to help work through the odds of keeping or replanting a stand of soybeans. It's a good reference to have available at this time of year.

**"Thanks for Subscribing!"**