Rainfall
Ankeny airport received 1.37”. Ag Engineering/Agronomy Research Farm between Ames and Boone received 1.73”. In addition, overnight and this morning, several locations received rain/snow and then snow.

What does this mean for planting?
We are still in good shape. The rain was a nice addition to our needs and we still aren’t past the optimum corn planting window. Farmers need to be patient and not work the ground when the soil at point of tillage implement depth is still wet. Likewise they need to not plant when the soil is still wet in the top 4 inches. Here is a table from ISU’s Corn Planting Guide (PM 1885 available at https://store.extension.iastate.edu/).

Recommended planting date windows for Iowa. Based on multiple-location research, Iowa State University. This is from an article in ICM news last March. Based on work done in 2006, 2007 & 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate Region of Iowa</th>
<th>Planting window to obtain 95 to 100% Yield Potential</th>
<th>Planting window to obtain 98 to 100% Yield Potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Central and Northeast</td>
<td>April 12 to May 2</td>
<td>April 12 to April 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest, West Central, Central, and East Central</td>
<td>April 15 to May 18</td>
<td>April 15 to May 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest, South Central and Southeast</td>
<td>April 11 to May 13</td>
<td>April 17 to May 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Integrated Agronomics

When the optimum window is for any given year varies. It is dependent on weather, so one year May 15 - 18 may be much better than April 15 - 18, another year April 25 - 30 may be the best time. The point being, we are still in good shape and should not be inclined to rush to the field with tillage or planting prior to the soil being fit for field work.

Alfalfa Stand Evaluation

Now is the time to be checking your alfalfa fields and determining if you want to keep the stand for another season or if it is time to tear this one up. There are two main things to determine. First, are there enough plants or stems and second, are the crowns that are present healthy enough to survive throughout the season?

Slice open several crowns from various areas in the field and inspect the condition of the tissue. If it is brown and/or rotting, the plant is pretty much gone. If half or more of the area is brown, the plant probably won’t make it through the season. If the whole area is nice and creamy white, it is a healthy plant. Here is a picture of a healthy crown and root I took while evaluating a stand a few years ago.

Determine how many plants are healthy enough and then how many stems per square foot are present. Counting plants used to be the most common method, but with more research, counting stems has appeared to be a better indicator.

Fifty or more stems per square foot should provide very good forage yields, 40 or more stems from plants with healthy crowns will provide a good hay crop, if there are less than forty stems per square foot then another crop should be considered.