Estimate First Crop Alfalfa Quality in the Field

NORTHEAST IOWA - Climatic variations impact alfalfa growth and development making it impossible to use a calendar date every spring to best determine when to harvest the first crop. However, the University of Wisconsin created a simple procedure called PEAQ that takes climate variations into account to estimate relative feed value (RFV) of standing alfalfa to better predict the best time to harvest first crop.

This spring, Iowa State University Extension will use PEAQ to monitor alfalfa fields across Northeast Iowa and provide the PEAQ readings 24/7 at www.extension.iastate.edu/dairyteam. Locally, fields in Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek counties will be assessed.

Farmers are welcome to follow the progress of these reports, but they are encouraged to use PEAQ in their own fields to best determine first crop harvest of alfalfa.

In general, it is recommended to harvest alfalfa at about 150 RFV for milking dairy herds and 125 RFV for heifers, stocker cattle and lactating beef cattle. First crop alfalfa standing in the field can drop 3 to 5 points of RFV per day. A one-week delay of first crop harvest could cost 30 RFV points in feed quality.

For more information on producing quality forages, contact your local ISU Extension office.

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News Release

Contact: Jennifer Bentley, ISU Extension dairy specialist, jbentley@iastate.edu
Teresa Wiemerslage, ISU Extension program coordinator, wiemer@iastate.edu

Breakfast on the Farm June 11 at The Dairy Center!
Everyone is invited to attend Breakfast on the Farm on June 11, 8 a.m. to noon at the Dairy Center, Calmar.

The menu includes pancakes, sausage, eggs, coffee and milk. The family-oriented event includes a tour of the 250-cow dairy farm at The Dairy Center and a farm animal petting zoo.

“The majority of Iowans have never been on an operating dairy farm,” says Dairy Foundation President Gary Kregel. “We thought a Breakfast on the Farm was the perfect answer to bring people to our facility to see modern dairy practices. We think it is very important that the public understand where the dairy products they eat originate, and why dairy producers do what they do.”

Event organizers are planning attendance of about 500, with a focus on area families who don't usually have access to farms. “We hope people come with an interest in learning, and a good appetite,” says Kregel.

Dairy Breakfasts in Wisconsin and Minnesota have been held for decades, and often draw in up to 5,000 people. It is hoped that if this first Breakfast on the Farm is a huge success and become an annual event.

Kregel adds that this is a free event for those wanting to learn more about agriculture and to celebrate Iowa’s rich history of agriculture.

Two large tents will be put up for serving and eating, and the event will be held rain or shine. Everyone will be allowed to park at the Northeast Iowa Community Based Dairy Foundation parking lot. The Dairy Center is located about a half mile south of NICC at 1527 Highway 150.

Many local and regional organizations are working together to make this event a reality, including The Northeast Iowa Dairy Foundation, the Midwest Dairy Association, area dairy promotional groups, the Iowa Egg Council, Northeast Iowa Community College, the Iowa Pork Producers, Iowa State University, Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative, Iowa dairy processors, and local 4-H clubs and FFA chapters.

The Dairy Center opened 11 years ago, and was created by the Northeast Iowa Dairy Foundation in partnership with Iowa State University and Northeast Iowa Community College. The purpose of the Dairy Foundation and The Dairy Center is to enhance the dairy industry by providing education, demonstration and research.

About 120 students use The Dairy Center while attending NICC classes for dairy science and other agriculture majors. “But another very important part of our ‘education’ mission is to teach the public about dairy farming as well,” says Kregel. “That is a big part of why we started planning for the June 11 Breakfast on The Farm.”

Kregel added many people don't understand the very important economic impact of the industry. “Every dairy cow is worth $16,000 each year in economic activity. Iowa's 215,000 cows contribute about $1.5 billion industry to the state's economy annually. That is something everyone should care about.”

Anyone who is interested in learning more about the event or working as a volunteer at the event can contact Jenn Bentley at 563-382-2949.

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News Release
Contact: Bob Hauer, Consumer Horticulture Specialist, (641) 394-2174, bhauer@iastate.edu
Teresa Wiemerslage, Communications Coordinator, 563-794-0599, wiemer@iastate.edu

ISU Extension Offers Rose Workshop

WAUKON -- Roses have the reputation for being high-maintenance, short-lived and disease-prone. Yet our state flower, the wild rose, grows in ditches throughout the state despite the harsh conditions. Isn’t there some middle ground?

Many of the modern shrub or landscape roses fit into this middle ground and combine hardiness, disease resistance and beauty. Selection and care are the keys to success. Rugosa roses are hardy and resistant to blackspot. Buck roses, developed at ISU are also popular. Shrub roses like Knock Out, Parkland, Explorer and Easy Elegance are designed for the tough growing conditions of the Midwest. Even hybrid tea roses like Peace and Tropicana can survive our winters if they’re planted correctly and overwintered under a mound of soil.

To find out how to grow roses in Iowa, join Iowa State University Extension horticulturist, Bob Hauer as he discusses the strengths and weaknesses of various roses as well as insect and disease control. Hauer grows over 50 rose varieties in his rural Waucoma garden.

This workshop will be held at the Dan and Sue Schlitter residence at 202 5th St. SW in Waukon on Saturday, June 25 from 10:00-11:30 am. The cost for this program is $3.00. To register, call the ISU Extension - Allamakee County office at 568-6345 by June 24 or register online at www.extension.iastate.edu/allamakee.

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News Release

Contact: Jennifer Bentley, ISU Extension dairy specialist, jbentley@iastate.edu
Teresa Wiemerslage, ISU Extension program coordinator, wiemer@iastate.edu

ISU Extension Offers Tours of Robotic Milkers

NORTHEAST IOWA - What seemed like a technology that was only a dream a few years ago continues to make progress in Iowa and neighboring states. Robotic milking systems can be customized to the needs of each cow resulting in quality milk production. This automation frees up farmers to focus on other aspects of their farming operation and family activities.

For producers looking to become more familiar with robotic milking and possibly adopting robotic milking technology, ISU Extension (along with MN, IL and WI) is leading tours for producers to visit current robotic installations.

June 7, 10 am, South Wayne, WI. Jack Wiegel Farm, 10037 Phillipine Rd, South Wayne, WI. Lely installation. From Browntown, Wi take MM north which turns into M at the Lafayette Co line. At Woodford go west (left) still on M. In one mile go south on Phillipine Road and it is the second farm on the right.

June 7, 1 pm, Stitzer, WI. Jim Lepeska Farm, 1683 Hopewell Rd, Stitzer, WI. DeLaval installation. From Montfort, go south on Hwy 80 2 miles, 5 miles west on Hopewell Rd.
June 14, 9:30 am, Monona, IA. Mark and Sandra Ehrhardt Farm, 567 Big Foot Road, Monona, IA. Lely installation. From Monona, take CR-X26 6 miles, then turn right onto Big Foot Rd. for 2.4 miles, farm on right.

June 14, 1:30 pm, Caledonia, MN. Heintz Badger Valley Farm, Doug and Julie Heintz, 8903 State Hwy. 76, Calendonia, MN 55921. Lely installation. From Caledonia, take Hwy 76 North 8 miles, (long driveway), If coming from North- it is 3 ½ miles south of Houston, MN.

June 15, 10:30 am, Buffalo Center, IA. Hawktree Dairy/Mike Bauman, 3100 Hwy 9, Buffalo Center, IA (just east). Lely installation. 563-583-6496.

June 15, 1:00 pm, Buffalo Center, IA. Stacey’s Dairy/Bruce Meinders, 2307 380th Street, Buffalo Center, IA. Lely installation. From Buffalo Center, west on 9 for 2 miles, South on R14 for 5 miles, west on 380th Street ¼ mile.

For more information regarding these tours, please contact ISU Extension Dairy Specialists Larry Tranel at 563-583-6496 or Jenn Bentley at 563-382-2949.

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News Release

Contact: Jennifer Bentley, ISU Extension dairy specialist, jbentley@iastate.edu
Teresa Wiemerslage, ISU Extension program coordinator, wiemer@iastate.edu

Organic Pasture Walk at Kruse Family Organic Dairy

LANSING – Mark Kruse will discuss his pasture conversion experiences, his rotational grazing system, organic pasture management, and manure management at a pasture walk on June 22.

Mark and Marcia Kruse have been dairy farming at their current 176 acre Lansing farm since 1977. An organic farming meeting, hosted by noted organic pioneers, the late Bill Welsh and his son Greg, inspired the Kruses to switch to organic methods in 1987, even though there was no market at the time. In 1994, the Kruses became the first organic dairy in Iowa for CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley.

Due to increased pasture requirements under the organic rules, and from his own interest in grazing systems, Mark decided to convert 56 acres of cropland to rotationally grazed pasture in 2004. With assistance from the NRCS, who provided the plans and cost share funds, the Kruses converted ridge top fields, previously in corn, small grains and alfalfa, to a timothy, orchardgrass, brome and clover pasture. “I really enjoy this setup,” notes Mark Kruse, which allows him to easily move his 80 cows to a new paddock each day.

A pasture-based system has multiple benefits for the farmer, the livestock, the environment and consumers: For the farmer it can help reduce input and labor costs. For the cattle it can improve health and longevity. For the environment it can reduce soil erosion and manure runoff (especially from steep cropland), and for the consumer it can provide milk and meat higher in healthy fatty acids like conjugated linoleic acid (CLA).

Kruse Family Organic Dairy Farm is located at 2601 Lafayette Ridge Road, Lansing. From Lansing, take Highway X52 South, drive 6 miles and then turn left on Lafayette Ridge Road. Drive 2 miles (keep left at the Y in the road) to 2601 Lafayette Ridge Road. From Harper’s Ferry, take Highway X52 North, drive 8 miles and then turn right on Lafayette Ridge Road. Drive 2 miles (keep left at the Y in the road) to 2601 Lafayette Ridge Road.

The walk is scheduled from 1-4 pm. Light refreshments will be served. This event is free and all are welcome. Be prepared for the weather and a walking tour of the farm. This pasture walk is sponsored by
the Allamakee Soil & Water Conservation District, Organic Valley and the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES). To register, or for more information, call 715-778-5775.

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**Other Releases**

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**More Farmers Deciding Not to Farm "Naked"**

WOOLSTOCK, Iowa - More Iowa farmers are deciding to plant a winter cover crop so the soil doesn't lie "naked" during the cold months.

Across the state, tractors are rolling as farmers put in crops during this brief planting season. For the first time, many of them are seeding into cover crop residue.

Woolstock-area farmer Todd Neilson says a cover crop makes the soil easier to plant into. He planted winter rye last fall for the first time.

"We're seeing the soil having more tilth to it. It's not as wet and gummy as it was in the past, just a more mellow type of soil. The roots have kept that soil broken up and more tillable."

Besides having more tillable soil during planting, Neilson also expects to reap some benefits as the crop matures.

"I think we are going to see organic matter go up more. Hopefully, we're going to retain some of our nitrogen that can be sequestered and reused. As the plant decays, it will re-release that nitrogen back into the soil."

About 40,000 acres of Iowa farmland were planted with some sort of cover crop last fall. Practical Farmers of Iowa recommends a cover crop to hold soil in place and at the same time improve water quality while still taking advantage of good corn and bean prices.

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5/5/11 2011 Farmland Rental Rates Increase Sharply
The ISU Extension 2011 cash rental rate survey for Iowa found that the average cash rent for corn and soybean land in the state for 2011 is $214 per acre, an increase of $30 per acre or 16 percent from a year ago.

This information has been sent to you by Teresa Wiemerslage, Regional Communications Coordinator for Region 4 ISU Extension, wiemer@iastate.edu, 563-794-0599.

For information about local Extension events and programs, contact:

Allamakee: Julie Christensen, 563-568-6345, juliechr@iastate.edu
Chickasaw: Mary Lynch, 641-394-2174, mllynch@iastate.edu
Clayton: Rita Severson, 563-245-1451, ritas@iastate.edu
Fayette: Kathy Steege, 563-425-3331, ksteege@iastate.edu
Howard: Sue Barnes, 563-547-3001, skbarnes@iastate.edu
Winneshiek: Carrie Courtney, 563-382-2949, ccourt@iastate.edu

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Teresa Wiemerslage, Iowa State University Extension
Region 4 Extension Education & Communications Coordinator
PH: 563-568-6345, Cell: 563-794-0599, wiemer@iastate.edu
www.iowafoodandfitness.org www.iowafreshfood.com
www.extension.iastate.edu