



2007 BALAGE NEWSLETTER FROM MYERS FARM

Wouldn't it be nice if in March we could look ahead and know if it would be a good year with lots of moisture and ideal growing conditions, or if we would have a drought! 2006 gave us two really good wet spells with great growing weather, and two serious droughts. With that combination, we had excellent hay production and the worst soybean yield we ever had in the same year.

At a crops meeting in February, 2007, a meteorologist said based on the global weather patterns, 2007 looks like a dryer year than normal. He said it would not be as bad as the drought year of 1988, but probably would be comparable to 1995. Unfortunately, 2007 left much to be desired.

Spring and First Cutting:

We had our new alfalfa seedings planted by April 1st. Then we had several weeks of mid winter like temperatures. Once it did warm up we had enough rain to get the new alfalfa plants up and growing. Considering everything, the new seedings got off to a good start. They were sprayed with Butyrac for broadleaf weed control, and some areas were sprayed with Poast for annual grass control.

The established alfalfa, instead of being sprayed with Velpar before dormancy broke, were sprayed with Pursuit since the weather didn't permit the Velpar to be applied before the alfalfa was growing. The spraying was for annual and winter annual weed control.

The first cutting harvest was started on May 21st and was finished on May 23rd. The weather during harvest was a little on the cool side, but the dry ground assisted in helping to wilt the crop before baling. As with all of our balage, Cargil's Storage Mate silage preservative was applied, and the crop, as always, was triple wrapped with plastic. The conditions were such that the balage should have been very high quality, which was born out by the forage test. The protein was 22%, and the relative feed value was 189. Please click here to view the first cutting forage test:

<http://www.myersfarm.com/ForageTests2007FirstCutting.pdf>

Second Cutting, and New Seeding First Cutting

Following the first cutting harvest, the temperatures ranged from near normal to above normal, and precipitation was sparse. Most significant rains missed us, and we would get anywhere from a tenth of an inch to eight or nine tenths of an inch. By early June some drought stress was evident on the ridges. Harvest was started on June 20th and completed on June 22nd. The conditions for wilting were ideal. Care had to be taken that it didn't get too dry for balage. The yield of the established stands was approximately two thirds of normal. The yield on the new seedings was almost non-existent. The new seedings were

harvested though since some of the plants had buds, and the regrowth could be sprayed for leafhoppers. Leafhopper populations are very high, especially for this early in the season. All of the alfalfa was sprayed for leafhoppers by June 25th. It does not appear that any weed control will be necessary for annual broadleaf weeds and grasses at this time.

Please click here to view the second cutting forage test:

<http://www.myersfarm.com/ForageTests2007SecondCutting.pdf>

Third Cutting, and New Seeding Second Cutting

Because of continued leafhopper pressure, all of the hay was sprayed again for leafhopper after the second cutting. Control was again very good. We had extreme drought conditions with less than an inch of rain falling between the second and third cuttings. The only reason for harvesting the third cutting and the new seeding second cutting was to clip it off and hope for rain for the next cutting. The yield was about 10% of a normal yield. The harvest was started on July 14th, and was completed on July 21st.

No forage test was taken since we had only 12 bales total of 3rd cutting and 2nd cutting new seedings.

Fourth Cutting, and New Seeding Third Cutting

From the time of the previous cutting, we had some showers, but certainly not enough precipitation to alleviate the drought. The alfalfa on the deeper ground did start to get some growth, however the ridges were practically dormant. The fields which were mostly ridges were harvested on August 11th with the hope that rain would be forthcoming for a good final crop. Good rain occurred the week of August 20th, with about 2.7 inches falling. The fields with deeper ground were harvested August 27th. The flats were slightly more mature than I like, but the ridges in those fields were mostly in the vegetative stage. The new seedings were harvested on September 3rd. Much of those fields had scattered mature areas, but mostly the hay was in the late vegetative stage. These fields were mostly dormant until the rains came in August. The total yield of the 4th cutting and the 3rd cutting of the new seeding was about 50% of normal. As of September 4th, the regrowth on the fields harvested on August 11th is coming along very nicely. Hopefully there will be enough warm weather yet and enough rain to make a 5th cutting, and a 4th cutting of the new seedings, practical over our entire acreage. Since the harvesting time was spread out over a significant period of time, two forage samples were taken.

Please click here to view the fourth cutting forage tests:

<http://www.myersfarm.com/ForageTests2007FourthCutting.pdf>

<http://www.myersfarm.com/ForageTests2007FourthCutting2.pdf>

Fifth Cutting

Unfortunately, the rains we had in the latter part of August did not continue in September. A 5th cutting was harvested from approximately half of the acreage. Normally we do harvest a 4th cutting from the new seedings, however, on the ridges there wasn't anything to harvest, and on the flats it would not have been cost efficient.

Please click here to view the fifth cutting forage tests:

<http://www.myersfarm.com/ForageTests2007FifthCutting.pdf>

Summary

Our total yield for 2007 was 55% of what the 2006 yield was off the same acreage. It certainly wasn't the type of year we had hoped for. The only good thing was the forage quality of all the cuttings was extremely good to excellent.