



## **2008 BALAGE NEWSLETTER FROM MYERS FARM**

A new year is always filled with hope. Hope that there will be enough sunshine and warmth. Hope that there will be adequate rainfall when needed. Hope that the yields for the year will be what we all strive for when we head to the fields to start the year.

After a very dry 2007, with very poor corn and alfalfa yields, 2008 got off to a really good start with respect to precipitation. We had abundant moisture during the winter. Fortunately, for most of it, the temperatures were just above freezing, so it was mainly rain instead of snow. My picture of the ideal winter is a white Christmas is nice. It is OK to have a white New Year's Day. But on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, the grass should turn green and spring should be here. Unfortunately, that is a dream that will never happen in central PA.

The abundant moisture continued through April and May. The new alfalfa seedings were planted about 2 weeks later than we strive for. We had a small window to get the corn planted just a little later than usual. Temperatures warmed up about 2 weeks later than normal this spring.

### **First Cutting:**

The established alfalfa was sprayed with Velpar just as it broke dormancy. Once again the weed control was excellent. The weather continued to stay wet through the time the first cutting was ready to harvest. Harvest was completed on May 26<sup>th</sup>. The yield was good, but not outstanding, probably because of the late arrival of Spring. 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 protein was 20.6%, and the relative feed value was 171. Please click here to view the first cutting forage test:

<http://www.myersfarm.com/2008ForageTestFirstCutting.pdf>

### **Second Cutting:**

Following the first cutting harvest, the temperatures ranged from near normal to somewhat above normal, and precipitation started to become sparse. By harvest time, the hay on the ridges was about 75% of a normal crop, while the yield on the flats was excellent. Generally once the second cutting is harvested, leafhoppers are becoming a problem. This is the first year in my memory when we didn't need to spray at all for leafhoppers. The second cutting harvest was completed on June 25<sup>th</sup>. Please click here to view the second cutting forage test:

<http://www.myersfarm.com/2008ForageTestSecondCutting.pdf>

**Third Cutting:**

As we got into July, we had very little rain. When the third cutting was harvested, the hay on the flats produced about half a crop, and on the ridges, practically nothing. Some fields were sprayed with either Gramoxone or Post for weed control following the second and third cutting harvests. Please click the links below to view the third cutting forage tests:

<http://www.myersfarm.com/2008ForageTestThirdCutting1.pdf>

<http://www.myersfarm.com/2008ForageTestThirdCutting2.pdf>

**Fourth Cutting:**

We had some good rain following the 3<sup>rd</sup> cutting harvest which allowed the 4<sup>th</sup> cutting to start back very nicely. Unfortunately the rains stopped after that. The 4<sup>th</sup> cutting produced about 1/3 of a crop. Harvest was completed on August 24<sup>th</sup>. Please click here to view the fourth cutting forage tests:

<http://www.myersfarm.com/2008ForageTestFourthCutting.pdf>

**Fifth Cutting:**

We had enough rain starting about the 10<sup>th</sup> of September to allow us to have a semi-respectable 5<sup>th</sup> cutting over all of the acreage. The yield wasn't anything to brag about, but it was worth taking off the field. The 5<sup>th</sup> cutting harvest was completed on October 13<sup>th</sup>.

**New Seedings:**

The poor new seedings! They got off to a slow start in terms of emergence with the early cool weather. Once the temperatures were conducive to growth, it got dry, and basically they struggled to get themselves established. Yields were very minimal for the entire year, but the stands are good, and should yield well next year if we have adequate moisture.

**Summary**

While being far from a normal year, it was a significantly better year than 2007 was. The forage quality of all the cuttings was extremely good to excellent, with the forage tests showing the lowest protein being 20.6% and the lowest relative feed value being 162. When a person considers the problems the farmers in the Midwest had with flooding this past spring into summer, we need to be very thankful for what we harvested, and to not complain about what might have been.