



2010 BALAGE NEWSLETTER FROM MYERS FARM
October 13, 2010

“Hunt the Hay”

When I was first teaching our daughter, Amy, to rake hay a number of years ago, we had an extremely dry year. There would be a little hay on the flats and in the dips, and nothing on the ridges. Many places weren't worth raking at all. She was a little mystified as I went from here to there to rake the little bit we had. We decided we were playing a game called “Hunt the Hay!” Needless to say, it wasn't a game I really wanted to play!

This year got off to a really good start. We had a spring with significantly warmer than average temperatures and adequate moisture. The alfalfa grew at a rapid rate, and it looked like we could have a super year. But then it decided to stop raining. During the third cutting this year, we were back to playing “Hunt the Hay!” On the plus side, all of the balage this year is excellent quality feed, and we may still be able to get some 6th cutting.

First Cutting:

The established alfalfa was sprayed with Velpar just as it broke dormancy. The weed control was excellent. With above normal temperatures the first cutting was harvested a week earlier than normal. The yield was good. Harvest was completed by May 17th. As with all of our balage, Cargil's Storage Mate silage preservative was applied, and the crop, as always, was triple wrapped with plastic. While the hay was all baled at the same time, I did two forage tests just to check the moisture. The first test had a protein of 21.8% and a relative feed value of 201. The second test had 23.1% protein and a relative feed value of 197. Please click the links below to view the complete first cutting forage tests:

<http://www.myersfarm.com/2010ForageTestFirstCutting1-1.pdf>

<http://www.myersfarm.com/2010ForageTestFirstCutting1-2.pdf>

Second Cutting:

Following the first cutting harvest, the temperatures stayed above normal. The second cutting was harvested on June 8th, two weeks earlier than normal. Some areas in different fields were spot sprayed with Poast for annual grass control after harvest. There was not any pressure from leafhoppers. At the time of cutting we were starting to see moisture stress on the ridges. The yield on the ridges was reduced, but the overall yield was still relatively good. The crude protein was 23.5% and the relative feed value was 190. Please click here to view the second cutting forage test:

<http://www.myersfarm.com/2010ForageTestSecondCutting.pdf>

Third Cutting:

As we moved on through June, there was not any significant rain. The corn, soybeans, and alfalfa were all suffering from severe drought stress. The third cutting was one of the poorest yields we've had in years, with just 13 bales off 50 acres. The harvest was completed on July 3rd. The temperatures continued above normal. Basically, the harvest was made at that point because the hay yield was shrinking rather than growing. Following harvest, we did a little spraying with Gramoxone for some pigweed and annual grasses along the edges of the fields, but there wasn't any weed pressure in most of the fields. The relative feed value was 215 and the protein was 21.4%. Please click the link below to view the third cutting forage test:
<http://www.myersfarm.com/2010ForageTestThirdCutting.pdf>

Fourth Cutting:

About two weeks after the third cutting was harvested, we did get some showers. Also, leafhopper pressure was increasing to the point that all of the acreage was sprayed. It was harvested on July 31st. The yield was about 40% of normal. That certainly wasn't good, but it was a significant improvement over the 3rd cutting. The relative feed value was 192 and the protein was 21.8%. Some pigweed and annual grasses were starting to grow, so the entire acreage was sprayed with Gramoxone immediately after baling was completed. Please click the link below to view the complete fourth cutting forage test:
<http://www.myersfarm.com/2010ForageTestFourthCutting.pdf>

Fifth Cutting:

Following the harvest of the fourth cutting, it stayed hot and dry. A week after harvest, there was only regrowth on about 20% of the acreage. We were very blessed to have had a total of approximately 4 inches of rain during the second week of August. Because we lost 10 days of growth time after the 4th cutting harvest until it rained, the 5th cutting wasn't harvested until the time period of September 1st through September 6th. The yields were good. The first batch tested 23.1% protein and had a relative feed value of 177. The second batch had 24.2% protein and a relative feed value of 204. Some of the first batch turned out on the dry side. We had 30 acres to bale that day, and lost about 2 hours of baling time because of a hydraulic hose which broke on the baler.
<http://www.myersfarm.com/2010ForageTestFifthCutting5-1.pdf>
<http://www.myersfarm.com/2010ForageTestFifthCutting5-2.pdf>

Sixth Cutting:

The growth since the harvest of the fifth cutting has been relatively good. We have yet to have had a frost. With the shortened day length and reduced growing degree days it takes longer to produce a crop worth running through the field for. It appears that probably 2/3 of our acreage should reach that point.

Summary:

Needless to say, this could have been a much better year for yields. But we always must count our blessings for what we do have, and not worry about what we didn't have. If we hadn't had the August rains this would have been a disastrous year for all of the crops.