ADVANCED AG SYSTEMS'S

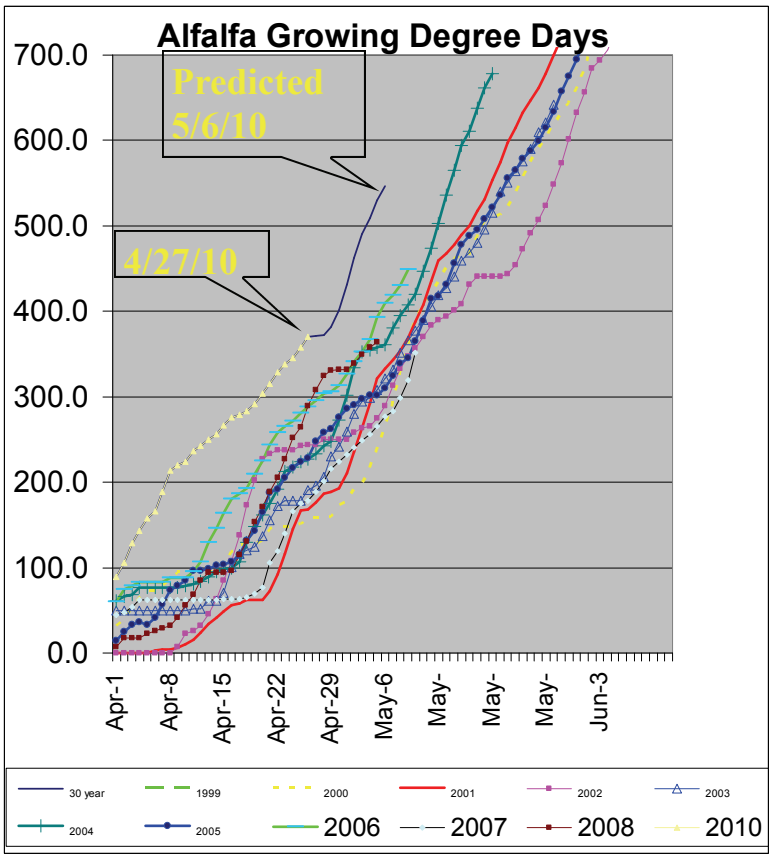
Crop Soil News

http://www.advancedagsys.com/

April 2010

"It is the crops that feed the cows that make the milk which creates the money."

Alert! ***The season (haycrop) is progressing faster than any year of the previous 10 and far ahead of normal. There is more money in making hay before planting corn this year.***



As you can see in the graph at the right, the heat units for much of the New York and New England area is running far ahead of normal—and similar to last year. In spite of snow forecasted today, the weekend is predicted to be in the 80's. This will continue to drive hay crop maturity at a record pace. As of 4/27/10 we are **9 days ahead** of the earliest previous warm year. **As of May 6,** after the hot weekend, we will be **2 weeks ahead** of where we **normally are on May 21.**

The big concern is that the fields which are all grass, or more than half grass, will slip by in quality before most farmers realize they are ready. Yes, this is insanely early, but that is the weather—similar to last year but warmer.

Depending on temperature, alfalfa will change from 0.5 to 1 NDFd/day. Grass is faster. Data from Dr. Larry Chase at Cornell Department of Animal Science, showed that 1 unit change of dNDF = .37 lbs DMI and **.55 lbs of 4% milk/cow/day**. As your forage feeding levels increase this plays an increasingly important role. If you are 10 days late, for 200 cows fed 1st cut for ½ the lactation, and the forage makes up 25% of the diet with $14/cwt milk, you are looking at **$5,600 impact.** When choosing between planting corn and harvesting haycrop, you are further ahead harvesting hay crop. Corn will NOT decrease in quality

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with the slight delay in planting, especially this early year. It only affects yield in a small percentage. Each day delay has a huge impact on the milk producing ability of your haycrop forage.

With low milk prices, it is absolutely critical that you have a profitable base of sufficient quantities of high quality forage. **For long term profitability in the Northeast dairy industry, you need to be feeding more than 60% forage in your diet**. High forage diets can put the profitability back into the milk check, IF the forage is **QUALITY** forage. YOU decide what quality forage you can feed by WHEN you START and FINISH your haylage harvest.

As this newsletter covers a wide area and more than one country, you need to make adjustments for your area. That is the good news. You have a system to do exactly that, developed by Dr. Cherney at Cornell University. **YOUR INDIVIDUAL FIELDS SHOULD DETERMINE WHEN YOU SHOULD START HARVEST,** using **YOUR alfalfa as a phenological predictor**. This is a fancy way of saying that the height of alfalfa can predict when it and grass fields, in your local climate and condition, should be cut.
It simply involves using a ruler and the following table:

When Alfalfa near a Grass field is 13 inches tall	Start to Cut Your Pure Grass Stands
When Alfalfa in Mixed 50% Alfalfa 50% Grass Stands is 23 inches tall	Cut Your Mixed Stands
When Alfalfa is 30 inches tall in > 80% Alfalfa	Cut Your Mostly Alfalfa Stands

Using the predictor system to determine what fields to harvest first, allows you to harvest early fields at peak quality, and later fields at peak quality. Thus you have high quality forage from ALL fields, even though the harvest may have started a week or more later for some fields.

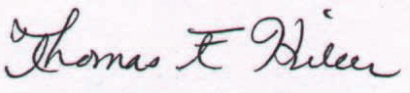
If you have fields that are in a low, warm, sheltered location, they **are ready earlier** than the rest of the farm. A well drained soil will have forage ahead of a poor drained soil. A north facing slope will be further behind a south or south east facing slope. For some farms, their clear alfalfa may be ready before a mostly grass field on a wet north facing slope. One extreme found alfalfa in a well drained, sheltered location next to a stream at 30 inches (ready to cut) while the majority of the farm with north facing and less than ideal drained soil was at least a week behind for even grass harvest!

A healthy dollop of **common sense is needed with any biological system**. You need to figure how long it takes you and then start before peak quality to end just after peak quality. If extended rain is in the forecast, it is better to cut early and get it in then wait. This is one system that you can use to your advantage.

So where is the prediction of a cool summer? The weather pattern is nearly identical to last year—very warm spring, cool summer. Adding to it is the collapse of El Nino and the normal aftermath that is discussed on the following web site:

http://www.accuweather.com/video/68856143001/global-warmth-getting-ready-to-collapse.asp

Sincerely,



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