



Field Crop Memo 2008

May 20, 2008

WEATHER:

Precipitation (inches) for Week Ending Sunday, May 18, 2008 (7 AM)				
Town	Week	Deviation From Normal	Season*	Deviation From Normal
Angelica	0.90	+0.27	4.13	-0.23
Franklinville	1.09	+0.32	4.38	-0.89
Jamestown	0.85	-0.02	4.11	-1.92

Growing Degree Days (Base 50 deg F) for Week Ending Sunday, May 18, 2008			
Town	Week	Season*	Deviation From Normal
Angelica	9	107	+22
Franklinville	13	111	+45
Jamestown	12	144	+56

* Season accumulations are from April 1st to date.

Precipitation and GDD information comes from NY Agricultural Statistics Service weekly "Weather and Crops" bulletin. The three sites used are to show weather trends throughout Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua Counties. Your individual location will vary from these numbers.

WHAT ARE GROWING DEGREE DAYS?

Crop plants require heat from their atmospheric environment to develop, grow, and mature. The effect of heat is cumulative as the growing plant progresses through its life cycle. Temperature is an indirect measure of the heat available in the atmosphere. Heat sufficient to cause growth and development in a plant is indicated when the daily mean temperature warms to a certain level, called the base or threshold temperature. Below (cooler than) this level there is essentially no growth. Different species of crop plants have different base temperatures. Cool season crops such as hay crops use 40 deg. F as the base, and warm season crops such as corn and soybeans use 50 deg. F as the base. New York State Agricultural Statistics Service uses the 50 deg. F base from April 1st to calculate the seasonal accumulation of growing degree days for the season allowing us to easily compare growing seasons. It can also be used to help predict insect development, allowing us to better know when to expect different insect problems. For specific information on how to calculate growing degree days, refer to page 5 in the "2008 Cornell Guide for Integrated Field Crop Management."

HAY CROP:

Even with the unusual weather patterns over the last few weeks, orchard grass is heading out now. Other grasses will follow shortly. Rain the last week has helped increase yields, however, quality is starting to go down quickly even with cooler weather. NOW is the time to be harvesting grass haylage.

As fields are harvested, you should consider top-dressing with nitrogen. With high fuel and fertilizer prices some are wondering is it worth it. Here is an example to see what yield increase you need to break even spreading urea. If urea is \$600 a ton and we spread 100 lbs./acre, it costs us \$30 an acre for urea. Assuming a \$10.00 per acre cost (fuel, equipment, and labor), it costs us \$40 per acre to top-dress with 100 lbs./acre of urea. How much yield increase do we need to break even? Assuming a value of quality dry hay at \$150/ton, we would need .27 tons/acre of dry matter increase to cover the cost. This would equal a little more than ½ ton of haylage per acre at 60% moisture. This doesn't take into account the increased quality you also get from top-dressing. I believe that most can expect to see greater yield increase than that from top-dressing with urea after first cutting helping us save feed cost this winter. If we don't fertilize now we can expect lower yields that may result in us spending even more money buying feed this winter.

SEEDINGS:

Seedings all should have been planted by this time. If you have fields that you plan to seed but have not yet, you should wait until the end of July and do a summer seeding or plant an annual forage such as Sorghum-Sudan or Millet. Sorghum-Sudan should be planted May 25th thru June 15th and Millet should be seeded July 1st thru 10th. Consult the "2008 Cornell Guide for Integrated Field Crop Management (pp 84-86) for more information. Alfalfa seedings are germinating. There are several herbicides available for seeding and established alfalfa. Alfalfa must be in the two to four leaf stage for most herbicides applied to new seedings. Clipping is currently the best way to control weed in grass fields, as well as being a good option for legume fields. Consult the "2008 Cornell Guide for Integrated Field Crop Management" (pp 99-103) for your particular weed situation. Now is the time to scout your new seedings for weed control.

PASTURE:

Pasture growth has been very good with the weekend rains. If the spring flush is getting ahead of your cows consider setting some paddocks aside to harvest as a hay crop. This will help keep pastures in the vegetative state providing the highest quality feed. It can also provide you with extra feed that may be needed later in the summer when pastures are not growing as fast. If you take a haycrop off some paddock consider nitrogen fertilizer after the cutting as you would any other hay field.

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to call me in the Ellicottville office at:
1-800-897-9189, ext. 123.

And as always, PLEASE FARM SAFELY,



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Field and Forage Crops