

FORAGER



Agronomics with livestock in mind!

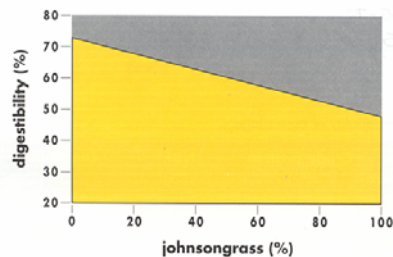


IN THE FIELD

Weed control is an extremely important factor in the management of any crop. As we begin a year that climatologists anticipate dry conditions it becomes increasingly important to enable crop plants to utilize the maximum amount of moisture possible.

Weed competition is most detrimental during the establishment of any crop. With the advent of *Roundup Ready Crops* many producers wait until weed infestations are severe to spray fields. Although the fields are often clean for the remainder of the season, weed competition has already reduced potential yields. This competition (as well as weed contamination in silage) can also reduce the digestibility and protein content of the crop. As a nutritionist you should be concerned with weed control. Take a look at the figure below showing the relationship between corn silage digestibility and weed infestation. Toxicity problems from weeds in silage can also be a nutritional nightmare. Encourage producers to manage weed control closely, as it will impact the quality of forage, you the nutritionist, need to work with.

Figure 3. The relationship between corn silage digestibility and johnsongrass infestation.



Source: Mueller et al., North Carolina, 1993.

ALFALFA WEEVILS ARE FOUND

A dry spring following a mild winter creates prime conditions for alfalfa weevil problems. Weevils have been found this week in Centra Pennsylvania. Larvae feed within growing tips on upper leaves of alfalfa plants, and then move to lower leaves later on. Plants are often skeletonized from the feeding larvae. From a distance a damaged field will appear grayish brown, similar to a frosted field. Adults also feed on alfalfa, but are rarely seen during the day.

Weevil injury will usually show up in late April or early-May. Peak injury is most frequently seen in mid-to-late May, but will probably appear earlier in many areas this year do to favorable weather conditions. Farmers should began monitoring stands and spray when 40% of plant *tips* show signs of damage. Harvesting often kills a significant number of weevils. However, check stubble closely following cutting to ensure weevil are not consuming crown buds and preventing regrowth. Local agronomists can help if weevil becomes a problem in your area. Alfalfa Weevil are pictured below in the larvae and adult stage.



Alfalfa Weevil, adult, and larvae stage.

QUALITY FORAGE FROM SMALL GRAIN SILAGE

Winter grains in many areas are often used as cover crops. In a dry year like this one these cover crops can be harvested for needed forage. The key to wheatlage, rylage, barley silage, or triticale silage is harvest timing. Harvesting small grains in the boot stage will give optimal quality and yield. Delaying harvest can result in a significant reduction in forage quality. Typically rye is ready for harvest as silage in late April, while barley is ready in early May, and wheat and triticale in mid-May (most areas, but may vary with environmental conditions).