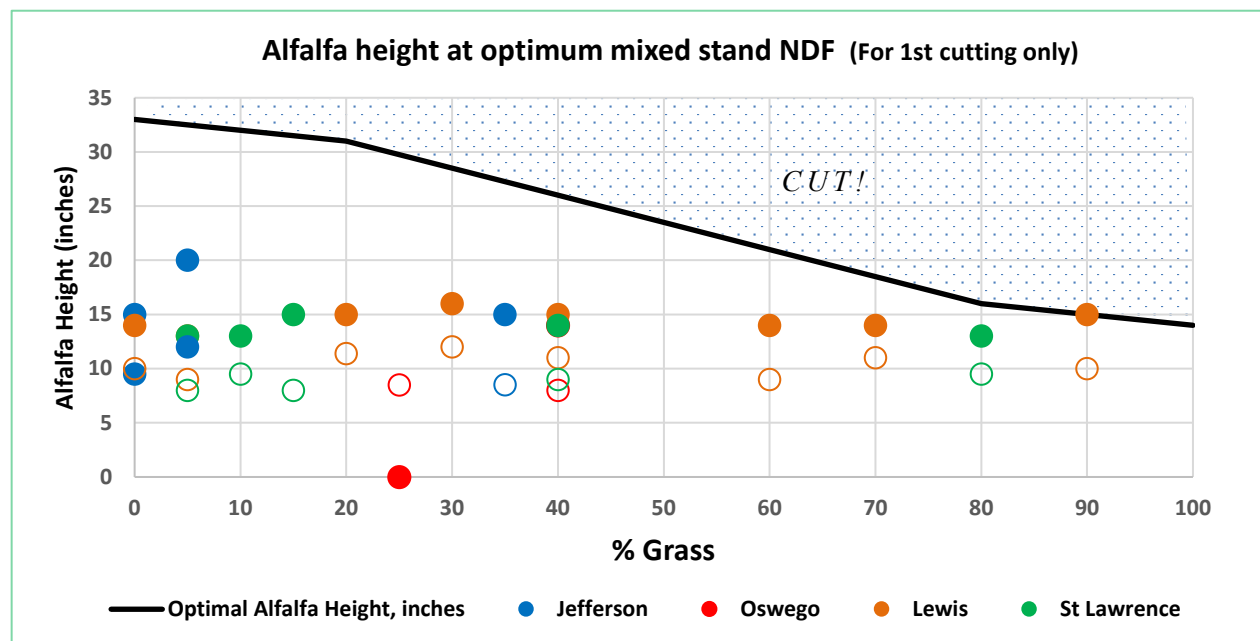


2025 1st Cutting Alfalfa-Grass Progress Report



1st Cutting Alfalfa-Grass Progress Report is a Cornell Cooperative Extension project. Data collection by A Birchenough, J Lawrence, M Spence, K Gugin, C Hostetter & E Antrim

REPORT - Wk of May 12, 2025

Check individual fields!

It is important to get out and measure alfalfa heights in your own fields to help judge the rate of growth and maturity for best timing of 1st cutting.

Refer to table on page 2 for detailed information on each site.

Plant crops based off of specific field conditions!

"We don't have to worry about "late" planting until around Memorial Day. So if your ground is still wet, be patient. You will get better results by planting a few days later into good soil conditions than forcing it by tilling and planting into wet ground". Joe Lawrence, CCA, Dairy Forage System Specialist w/ PRO-DAIRY

Goal % NDF - NDF (Neutral Detergent Fiber) content is the best predictor of forage quality for lactating dairy cows. NDF content of standing first cutting alfalfa and grasses is easily predicted by alfalfa height. The relationship between NDF content in an alfalfa-grass mix and alfalfa height only works for first cutting. Second and 3rd cuttings should simply be taken according to the calendar - at 28 to 35 day intervals.

100% Grass - Goal NDF (on a dry matter basis) is 50% (target range 48-55). Tallest alfalfa height will be 14-16 inches.

100% Alfalfa - Goal NDF is 40% (target range 39-43). Tallest alfalfa height will be 28-30 inches.

Mixed stand - for a 50:50 alfalfa:grass stand, the goal NDF is 43%. Tallest alfalfa height will be 22-23 inches.

Begin harvest early enough so that most of your crop is harvested within the "ideal" range. Typically NDF increases about 0.5 to 0.7/day for alfalfa and about 0.8 to 1.2/day for grass. Expect the lower end of that range in cooler weather and the higher end in warm.

Weekly Tips and Observations

- 100% grass field need to be harvested soon for dairy quality feed (when alfalfa is approximately 14-15 inches tall).
- With the accelerated growth, when preparing to harvest grass fields, check the height of the seed head (buy cutting open stems, see picture on next page) to assure the seed head is above the height of mowing (3-4"). Cutting grass when the seed head is below the mower height will result in the grass heading out immediately after cutting reducing productivity of the regrowth. This week orchardgrass seedhead height ranged from 3 – 9", tall fescue seedhead height ranged from 2-4" across the region and one of the fields in this was already harvested.

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| County | Town/Field | Elevation (feet) | Soil | | Alfalfa Height, inches | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------|---------|------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--|
| | | | Type | % Grass | 5-May | 12-May | 19-May | 26-May | |
| Jefferson | Adams | 435 | Collamer | 5 | 12 | 20 | | | |
| Jefferson | Adams Center | 465 | Madrid | 35 | 9 | 15 | | | |
| Jefferson | Champion | 1295 | Lagrosse | 0 | 10 | 15 | | | |
| Lewis | Martinsburg | 1265 | Herkimer | 20 | 11 | 15 | | | |
| Lewis | Martinsburg | 1275 | Herkimer | 60 | 9 | 14 | | | |
| Lewis | Lowville | 1035 | Nellis | 5 | 9 | 13 | | | |
| Lewis | Denmark | 800 | Kendaia | 70 | 11 | 14 | | | |
| Lewis | West Turin | 1310 | Herkimer | 90 | 10 | 15 | | | |
| Lewis | Leyden | 1270 | Nellis | 40 | 11 | 15 | | | |
| Lewis | New Bremen | 865 | Paxton | 0 | 10 | 14 | | | |
| Lewis | Turin | 820 | Plainfield | 30 | 12 | 16 | | | |
| Oswego | Richland/ Altm | 570 | Alton | 40 | 8 | 14 | | | |
| Oswego | Lacona | 605 | Alton | 25 | 9 | cut | | | |
| St Lawrence | Canton | 565 | Muskellunge | 10 | 10 | 13 | | | |
| St Lawrence | Depeyster | 350 | Kalurah | 80 | 10 | 13 | | | |
| St. Lawrence | Potsdam | 705 | Eelweir | 5 | 8 | 13 | | | |
| St. Lawrence | North Lawrenc | 495 | Hailesboro | 15 | 8 | 15 | | | |
| St. Lawrence | Chase Mills | 265 | Grenville | 40 | 9 | 14 | | | |

Example of split grass stem with seedhead approximately 5" above soil surface (*picture from previous growing season*).

