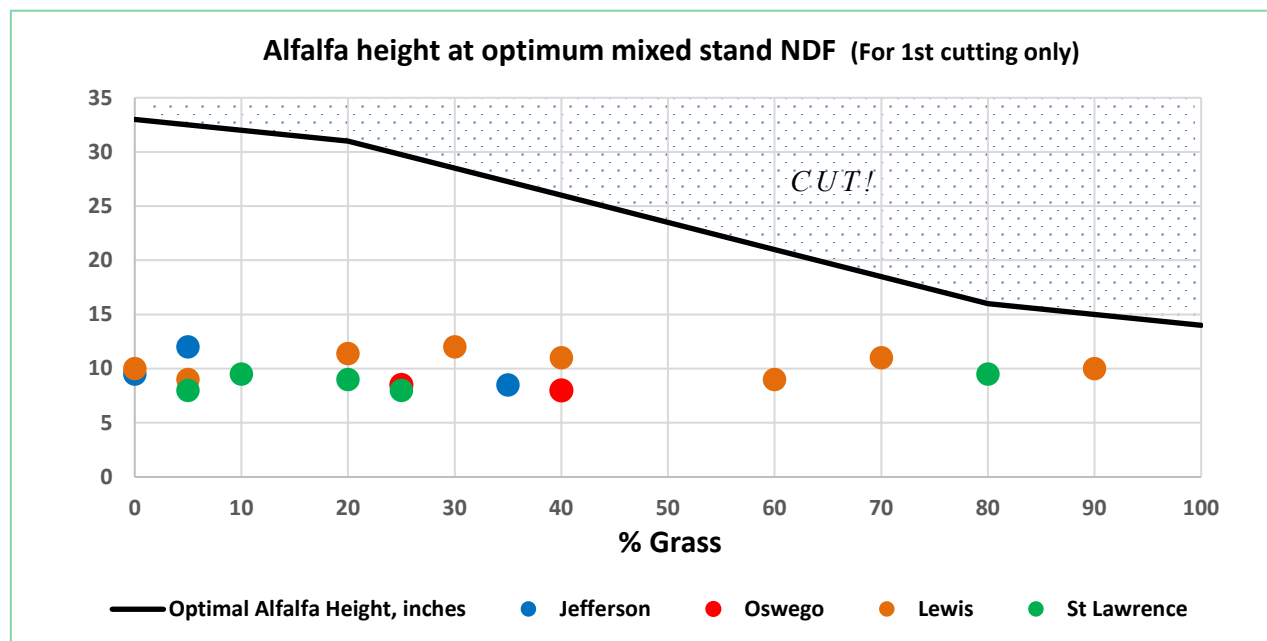


## 2025 1st Cutting Alfalfa-Grass Progress Report



### REPORT - Wk of May 5, 2025

#### Check individual fields!

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

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

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

**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.

## 2025 1st Cutting Alfalfa-Grass Progress Report

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

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

