Monitoring 1st Cut Harvest Timing

First cutting can represent a significant portion of your total hay crop for the year and has the potential to be very high quality feed if harvested at the correct timing. To help you monitor that timing there are tools available.

Monitoring Programs
Several CCE teams statewide offer weekly monitoring programs in the month of May and provide field updates in many areas of the state. See the list of 2017 programs on page 2 and contact your local CCE specialist to receive these weekly updates.

Alfalfa Height
Alfalfa Height is a great indicator of harvest timing for alfalfa and grass fields. The graph on page 2 can be used to identify the optimum alfalfa height for harvest based on the percent grass in the stand.

Mixed Stand
A key to utilizing this information is an accurate determination of the percent grass in the field. Due to the growth habits of the crops it often appears that there is a higher % alfalfa than there actually is. It is very important to walk fields and get a representative view of the percentage in the entire field. Given that our eyes often tell us there is more alfalfa there than there actually is be prepared to harvest earlier than anticipated if the sample comes back with a higher percentage grass.

Harvest Preparation
• Have everything in place to roll when fields are ready to be cut.
  o Harvest Team & Equipment
  o Storage site
  o Be prepared to stop planting corn when the hay in ready to harvest
  o Consider everyone’s safety during this busy season

Minimize the Harvest Window
• Minimizing the time between cutting and chopping is very beneficial to forage quality
  • “Hay in a Day” can improve forage quality and allow for quality harvest in narrow weather windows.
    o True wide swathing is a swath that is laid out at > 80% of cutter bar width
    o Removing conditioners from the mower will accelerate dry down to silage moistures
    o Strive for a uniform swath with no clumps

Storage
• Proper Dry Matter Content at Harvest
• Consider the use of inoculants, especially for forage destine for feed out in warm months
• Bunk Silos/Drive Over Piles – Packing Weight, Packing Weight, Packing Weight and COVER
2017 CCE 1st Cutting Monitoring Programs

Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Team

**Chenango, Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery, Otsego, Saratoga & Schoharie Counties**

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Delaware County CCE

**Delaware County**

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Northwest New York Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team

**Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming & Yates Counties**

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Oneida County CCE

**Oneida & Madison Counties**

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South Central New York Dairy & Field Crops

**Broome, Chemung, Cortland, Onondaga, Tioga & Tompkins Counties**

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