

NORTHERN MINNESOTA GRASS SEED GROWERS NEWSLETTER

July 15, 2008

GENERAL CROP CONDITION

Not normal, but not bad.

This week saw rain and wind in the area, with several areas receiving fairly large amounts. Although we are still cool and wet, the grass and grains are benefitting from the conditions and looking great. Just have to get through the fields without getting stuck.

Ryegrass

Almost all fields have completed flowering. At this time last year, the majority of ryegrass fields were ready to be swathed, and cutting was beginning.

Fall Seeded Ryegrass



Bluegrass

This week has most early bluegrass fields cut and the harvest on older, established fields just beginning.



At this time last year the bluegrass fields were beginning to be burned off with the advent of dry weather.

PEST MANAGEMENT

Ryegrass

Rust has been found in ryegrass !!

There are several samples that are being submitted for identification this week, but looks like it is here. Reports are that it is being found to our south, and so should be moving north slowly.

If you have what looks like rust in your ryegrass please contact your agronomist and the University of Minnesota. When rust is first observed on ryegrass, be sure to let us know. A student, John Frelich is hired to monitor this season and will be making a few trips north this summer as part of his work.

Send samples to:

Eric Watkins
305 Alderman Hall
1970 Folwell Ave.
St. Paul MN 55108

If and when rust is identified in the region, the two main strategies for rust control would be:

- 1) Spray a fungicide as soon as it can be scheduled or,
- 2) Continue to scout your ryegrass fields for rust

A fungicide will provide two to three weeks of protection depending product and rate. After pollen shed, ryegrass should be swathed in approximately three to three and one-half weeks. A fungicide applied now has the potential to protect the ryegrass plant from rust infection until swathing.

If the decision is to continue to scout for rust it is **important to scout your fields every couple of days**. If conditions are favorable, this fungal disease can “explode” in just a few days.

What does rust look like? The first link is leaf rust in wheat.

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Main/docs.htm?docid=9915>. The second is for stem rust in wheat.

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Main/docs.htm?docid=9910>. The third is for crown rust in oats

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Main/docs.htm?docid=9919>. Rust in ryegrass looks similar to rust in cereals.

The three links below are pest updates from the U of MN and the MN Dept of Ag. These reports are updated regularly during the summer months. The first link is for vegetable crops, second link is the MN Dept of Ag Pest Survey and the third is a crop report from the U of MN in Crookston.

<http://www.vegedge.umn.edu/mnfruit&vegnews/Vol4/vol4n1.htm>

<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/plants/pestmanagement/pestsurvey.htm>

http://nwroc.umn.edu/Cropping_Issues/croppingissues.htm

CROP MANAGEMENT

Insects

No real insect pressure at this time. Grasshoppers are not any real threat, and the armyworm count is moderately low.

Ryegrass Growing Degree Days (GDD)

Ryegrass GDD units have been tracked since the 2005 season. A base temp of 32 degrees F has been used for ryegrass (T-Base =32 F). The GDD information presented in the table below is year to date data, through and including July 12, for the years 2005 to 2008.

Year	2008	2007	2006	2005	08 vs. 07
March	6	90	53	35	-84
April	202	322	529	448	-120
May	508	746	749	641	-238
June	870	991	1014	986	-121
July 1-12	375	423	459	475	-48
Total	1,961	2,572	2,804	2,585	-611

The 2008 season continues to track cooler than any year since 2005. Year-to-date GDD has the 2008 season -611 behind the 2007, -843 behind 2006 and -624 behind 2005. As of last week, the 2008 season was **19.0 days** behind the three year average. This week we are **22.1 days** behind the three year average.

Spring and fall seeded ryegrass are heading and continue to shed pollen. Ryegrass typically sheds pollen in the mid-morning. At times it can look like dust blowing from vehicles driving on gravel roads.

Check ryegrass fields for rust. Trace rust levels spotted in the Red Lake Falls area last week. In 2006 & 2007, leaf and stem rusts were detected at approximately, 1950 GDD. Field scouting will determine actual presence of this disease and the level of infection.

Grass Seed News Stories for June, 2008

Harvesting in Oregon, 2008.





Jesse Skoubo/Democrat-Herald
Cody Younger of Albany inspects the cutting blades of a combine between jobs Thursday afternoon in Tangent.

Mid-valley grass seed harvest under way

By Steve Lathrop
Albany Democrat-Herald

A wet and cool spring has had little impact on local grass seed growers as farmers began harvesting annual ryegrass this week.

"It looks like it will be a good average crop," said Mark Mellbye of the Oregon State University Linn County Extension Service. "It has been a wet spring but not so wet that it has interfered with the harvest."

Mellbye noted that despite the plentiful rains early, soils in the mid-valley are not saturated and some slight delays in May have not affected the timing of harvest greatly.

Tom Malpass of Harrisburg said his operation is about a week behind but that he anticipated it would be that way.

"There was late pollination, but things are moving along. We got started last Thursday," said Malpass. "Forage fescue is cut. We've started annual ryegrass. It's progressing nicely."

Cody Younger of Younger Farms south of Tangent, began his harvest on Saturday and has been working 15-hour days since. He started his annual ryegrass harvest Tuesday.

"I would say we are about a week later than usual. But things are pretty normal," said Younger. "We should have most of it cut by the end of the week."

Mellbye indicated that scattered fields have seen an outbreak of vole problems that have caused some damage. Younger noted that he has seen that reflected in patches of his fields.

"They have wiped out an acre here and there," he said.

Both Malpass and Younger put their combines in the field early this week and are expecting a normal yield.

"As long as we don't have any unforeseen disasters and the weather cooperates I think things look OK," said Malpass.

Call of the Land for July 9 - 2008 Grass and Legume Seed Market update

Note: prices provided are grower prices, quoted by processors to growers after cleaning and dockage.

As the grass and legume sectors move into harvest mode, a couple factors are influencing the marketplace.

Retail movement of forages this spring was down, which was not a big surprise, as the livestock sector continues to struggle. Sales are reported to be down anywhere from 20 to 40 % of normal. With the retail season complete, and less than average spring sales, inventories of many species remain and will now be held into the fall.

The big factor affecting the turf seed side of things is early reports indicate a very good US

grass seed crop being harvested now, in both Oregon and the mid-west. With the US economy still in the doldrums, this will create lower demand, which in turn could pressure our creeping red fescue prices.

In the turf grass sector, creeping red fescue quotes have backed off, down to the 65 to 68 cents/lb mark for fall deliveries. Until the US harvest gets completed and we have a better idea of their production, there will be pressure on creeping red fescue prices. What looked like a very promising crop coming out of winter, the Peace region's creeper crop is now dry, with a bumper crop now out of reach. Rain in the area will be needed soon to help finish the crop. With expected lower European certified seed production, certified Boreal creeping red fescue is still showing a 5 to 10 ¢/lb premium.

In the forage grass seed sector, prices have stabilized falling the spring run. Common meadow brome grass seed quotes remain strong, in the \$1.50-\$1.60/lb range, with certified Fleet meadow brome anywhere from \$1.70 to \$1.90. Inventories of meadow are very low. Common smooth brome grass seed quotes are in the \$1.10 to \$1.20/lb range, while certified Carlton is commanding a 10 to 15 ¢/lb premium. Common timothy remains around the 50 ¢/lb mark, with certified Climax timothy at 60 to 65 cents/lb.

On the legume side of thing, quotes have remained relatively unchanged. Sweet clover quotes remain strong at 30 ¢/lb, with alsike clover quotes around 35 – 45 ¢/lb. Red clover quotes are between 85¢/lb and \$1.00/lb, but acres for new production are down. Common alfalfa seed prices are quoted anywhere from 1.00 to \$1.25/lb, depending upon quality. But with the majority of alfalfa seed production in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, acres are down, as farmers there switched to more grain and oilseed crops.

The next edition of the newsletter is scheduled to be released on July 22, 2008.

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