

# **NORTHERN MINNESOTA GRASS SEED GROWERS NEWSLETTER July 30, 2008**

## **GENERAL CROP CONDITION**

### **Harvest stops and starts.**

This week saw continued rain, sunshine, and 80 degree temperatures.

### **Ryegrass**

Almost all fields have completed flowering, and the color of maturity is becoming apparent. At this time last year, the majority of the spring and the early fall seeded ryegrass had been harvested. Fall seeded ryegrass was being swathed as well.

### **Fall Seeded Ryegrass**



## Bluegrass

This week has most of the early bluegrass fields harvested and the later, elite varieties will soon be harvested later in the week. Reports show that the yields are normal to slightly below normal.



At this time last year the bluegrass fields were pretty well burned around the region.

## PEST AND CROP MANAGEMENT

### Ryegrass

Keep an eye on ryegrass maturity as fields can turn quickly. When ryegrass is close to the 40% moisture level, seed moisture can drop 2% points or more per day!

When to swath ryegrass? That is a question being asked by growers. It seems that our eyes are drawn to the most mature areas of the field. When making the determination on when to swath be sure that a **representative sample is taken from the entire field not just the areas that are most mature.** One method to get a representative field sample is to take samples from areas that look mature, from areas that are intermediate and from areas of the field that look green. Note the percentage of the field in each of these categories. This will give you a good overall field estimate of maturity.

Once these samples are collected seed moisture can be determined using a microwave oven. Swathing **should not** begin until moisture content of the seed is 35 to 40%. Seed moisture content is determined rubbing the seed from the spike and using the microwave oven to remove the seed moisture.

Caution: In addition to the seed sample, place a small amount of water in a microwave safe container. This will prevent the seed from exploding in the oven.

Start with a predetermined seed weight (10 grams) and set the microwave oven for 1 to 1.5 minutes.

Continue this procedure until the seed weight is constant. For example, if the initial weight was 10 grams and the final weight was 6 grams the seed moisture is 40%.

As ryegrass seed moisture levels decline, the amount of seed shatter will increase. Ryegrass fields that have turned quickly may have to be swathed in the early morning and evening. This technique of not swathing mid-day was a management practice used to reduce seed shatter in timothy seed production.

### RUST IN RYEGRASS

As we mentioned previously, rust is being found in a few isolated areas, and primarily on varieties that appear susceptible. However, given the maturity of the crop, an application of fungicide should not be needed or recommended. It appears that for the most part, we have missed out on any real impact of rust in 2008.

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. Here are a few pictures of the procedure for collecting rust spores for identification.



Rust collection in the ryegrass variety trials.



A ryegrass stem with a healthy infection of spores.



Collecting the spores in a pill-bottle.



A rust sample that is ready to be submitted for identification in St. Paul.

Send samples to:

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

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](http://nwroc.umn.edu/Cropping_Issues/croppingissues.htm)

## Insects

No real insect pressure at this time.

## 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 26 for the years 2005 to 2008.

<b>Year</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>08 vs. 07</b>
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 1-26	851	943	1,034	989	-92
Total	2,437	3,092	3,379	3,099	-655

The 2008 season continues to track cooler than any year since 2005. Year-to-date GDD has the 2008 season -655 behind the 2007, -942 behind 2006 and -662 behind 2005. As of last week, the 2008 season was **19.4 days** behind the three year average. This week we are **19.8 days** behind the three year average.

Rust has been observed in area ryegrass fields. The GDD model predicted rust at the accumulation of approximately 1950 GDD. Actual first rust was observed at approximately 2050 GDD.

The next edition of the newsletter is scheduled to be released on August 11, 2008.

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