



Extension Connection

Monthly Highlights – June 2016

Quality forage is essential to productivity and profitability of dairy farms.

- [Alfalfa Quality Watch](#)
- [4-H Grows True Leaders](#)
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Alfalfa Quality Watch

Forages are the foundation of diets for ruminant animals, and a focus on quality forage is essential to productivity and profitability of dairy farms. The Alfalfa Quality Monitoring program is a long standing educational program for dairy farmers in Fond du Lac County. To help farmers determine the optimal time to harvest first crop alfalfa, UW-Extension Dairy & Livestock Agent Tina Kohlman, in cooperation with the Fond du Lac County Forage Council, conducted the annual Alfalfa Forage Quality Watch Program.

With low milk prices, it is even more crucial to harvest high quality forages. Having to buy high quality forages, or feedstuffs to increase the quality of the dairy ration when low quality forages are on the farm, can be very expensive and impact the profitability of the farm.

Historically, farmers have waited until the alfalfa plant “flowered” or waited until Memorial Day to harvest alfalfa. Based on research, we know that rule of thumb no longer works to achieve high quality forage. The goal is to harvest first crop alfalfa at 170 Relative Feed Value (RFV), which after harvesting and storage losses would be 150 to 160 RFV by the time it is fed to the cow. High quality alfalfa is defined as 150 RFV or higher. As farmers increase milk production on the farm, so does the quality of the forage. Today, many farms which produce 100 pounds of milk per cow are looking to harvest alfalfa at 200 RFV, with an end product around 185 RFV.

For six days in May, Tina Kohlman collected nearly 60 samples of alfalfa, from 5 locations throughout Fond du Lac County, to determine the quality of standing alfalfa. Samples were submitted for laboratory analysis, with the Fond du Lac County Forage Council providing financial support for lab fees. Based on laboratory analysis, the window of opportunity to harvest high quality alfalfa (185 RFV out of storage) was around May 23rd (1 week prior to Memorial Day). Unfortunately with impending rains, farmers have been slow to harvest alfalfa. As of May 31st, the quality of the standing alfalfa decreased to 124-143 RFV.

Results and information was conveyed to dairy farmers and agri-business professionals in numerous ways including: e-blasts; website; ForageLine (voice mail service); and radio. An initial postcard was sent to dairy farmers when the alfalfa monitoring program started for the season.

4-H Grows True Leaders

True leaders have real confidence, know how to work well with others, can endure through challenges, and will stick to a job until it gets done. We believe true leaders aren't born—they are grown. The 4-H experience is proven to grow true leaders with life skills like confidence, teamwork, curiosity, and resilience.

In order to grow 4-H, and more true leaders, the National 4-H Council launched a promotional campaign to highlight the impact of 4-H in our youth and our community. The first step is to shout! Fond du Lac County is honoring youth who are making an impact in their lives and the lives of others through shout outs on our Facebook page and other social media

using the national hashtag #TrueLeaders and our county's #FDLCo4H. There is a call to action for all members to use these hashtags. Members recently visited a local radio station to talk about their experience in 4-H.

Our goal has been to raise the visibility and relevance of 4-H, driving awareness of our belief in the POWER OF YOUTH across the nation. The groundswell of 4-H voices publicly honoring youth who are making an impact will demonstrate in a real and powerful way what it means to be a true leader. It will also show alumni, parents, community leaders, and supporters our strength in numbers and ability to rally around a cause we care about - providing more kids the opportunity to acquire the skills to succeed in their lives, community, and careers. Get involved! Like us on Facebook at: [Fond du Lac County 4-H](#).



IGNITE! Youth Idea Challenge

The IGNITE! Youth Idea Challenge was developed to get teams of high-school students from the Fond du Lac County area to assess market needs and identify a solution. The teams were then judged upon those solutions which created opportunity and lasting, positive change. Teams submitted their ideas in February and a total of six teams were initially invited to participate in the pitch event on April 13.

Local news coverage was provided by Channel 11 WLUK in Green Bay. The video is shown here <http://bit.ly/1UHRgYo>. Mike Winkler worked with the committee planning the event and one of his main efforts was completing and posting materials on Google Forms to streamline the registration process. The other issues that the committee faced in planning the event were the relatively short amount of time teams were able to meet with their mentor and fully develop solutions that were vetted and also complete with financial plans or even business plans. Mentors are crucial to the process because they guide the students and ensure work is being done throughout the competition.

While the presentation/pitch was deemed a huge success as an inaugural event, many changes are being planned for the 2017 Challenge. During Mike's work with the STEM Academy, he developed an online blank business plan (fill in the blanks) which the high school students can utilize in the competition next year. The planning committee has met several times since the event and changes for next year include:

- 1) Adding junior high student groups to the competition.
- 2) Possibly adding 4-H SPIN groups if the interest arises.
- 3) Creating two distinct areas of competition, one for a tangible product and one for an intangible solution, such as economic development or redevelopment.
- 4) Access to more school district educators and inviting more groups, such as FFA, to have students compete.
- 5) Develop online training videos and use Slack as a workflow management/process tool.

Mike will continue his work with the planning committee to have the kickoff event in October, which is planned to be another "Entrepreneurship on Tour" event at local small business with the potential student competitors in the event. The next pitch event is tentatively scheduled to take place in February 2017.

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