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Alfalfa Weevil

If alfalfa makes up a portion of your forage program, it's time to scout for alfalfa weevils. The Kansas Mesonet alfalfa weevil growing degree day calculator indicates all of our stations at or approaching the beginning of feeding damage, a fact confirmed with feeding injury assessments made across the District late last week.

Feeding injury and larvae were found at each of five sampled sites. Most larvae are still less than an eighth of an inch in length, with some small enough they are difficult to find even when plants are dissected. Numbers at most sites are light thus far at less than one larvae per stem. Unfortunately, regrowth of many stands is still slow as we await warmer temperatures. At the same time, our growing degree days – and thus the weevil hatch time frame – are ahead of schedule for this time of year.

Start scouting soon, breaking 30-50 randomly selected stems and shaking them individually in to a deep sided bucket. At current alfalfa hay prices, economic returns to treatment may be possible at infestation levels of one larvae/stem or slightly lower. NOTE: when larvae are very small, they may be difficult to dislodge from sampled stems. Split terminal growth with a knife to dislodge additional feeding larvae. It is likely larvae are still hatching, so additional scouting will likely be necessary if even low levels are found.

If chemical control is desired, multiple products are available. For information on alfalfa weevil control products, request a copy of the 2022 Alfalfa Insect Pest Management Guide from any District Office. It is also available online at: <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/mf809.pdf> . Always read and follow label directions.

Early Season Turf Mowing Height

Mowing height for cool season turf grasses can play a big role in the health of the turf grass stand through the summer – and even beyond. Weeds like crabgrass need light to germinate seeds. A tall, thick turf grass stand can shade soil reducing weed pressure. Turf grass root depth is correlated to mowing height as well: the higher the cutting height, the deeper the root system with the result a more drought resistant turf. That's why we typically suggest mowing heights of two to three inches for Kentucky bluegrass and three to three and a half inches for tall fescue.

While best to maintain these taller heights through the growing season, you can get away with mowing (a little) lower for the first mowing or two in early spring. Doing so might actually speed green-up as we remove old, dead grass and allow the soil to warm up more quickly. Just don't get carried away and scalp the turf. Mowing height shouldn't be lowered to less than about an inch and a half. After a mowing, increase the height again.