Thursday – June 4, 2020

BILL: And welcome into our Thursday edition of Ag Talk. Bill Rice along with Ed Lentz. And Ed today a premier on cutting hay.

ED: It would be nice if some people already had hay cutting done because our forages are ready for that but as always we come into this time of year as the weather doesn’t cooperate we don’t get drying conditions we get rain and other things. Because when you cut hay, you got to cut it and then it’s got to dry. You want lower humidity and we generally don’t have that low humidity this time of year so it’s a challenge. But there is something a person can do keep the longevity or to keep their stand alive. The biggest concern we have is if we cut it too short it may effect the life of how long that stands is going to live and of course if we do this right we could have good alfalfa or good alfalfa grass mix for up to five years. If we do this wrong we may have to reseed it in three years. So this is just a reminder since probably many people have not been able to cut their hay is to think about where does this plant store its reserves after we cut it to get new growth to come back. Look at alfalfa and red clover, that growing area where it stores things is below ground in the taproot so we can actually cut it a little shorter. In grasses it’s going to be above ground it’s going to be in the stem bases of the tillers or a lot of people would just call the stems on that grass. So if we cut them too short we may not allow enough of that to get built up to regrow. And another thing I seen in some forage samples, Bill, if you also cut too close you actually get soil into your sample and that’s going to cause ash content and that’s going to lower the quality too. I mean the animals aren’t going to want to eat soil that’s up on the stems and that. So for clover and alfalfa we recommend no shorter than two inches. We also recommend that you have one cutting, cause we can get anywhere from three to four cuttings a year, we allow one cutting of that to go to a full bloom rather than a 10% bloom we talked about last week to build up reserves. Most of the time, Bill, we get that in this first cutting because we can’t cut it at the ideal time and we have a good shot at getting those reserves early. Cool season grasses if it’s the first year you want to be above four inches when you cut it. If it’s more mature than one year you can cut it down to three inches. When we get down to mixed stands we got alfalfa with a grass we kind of take a compromise between the two. The alfalfa grass we can say go two and a half inches, a little shorter for the grass and a little taller for the alfalfa. And then if you mainly have grass with some alfalfa we would say three inches is the compromise. So as you’re out there cutting your hay keep these things in mind that they can provide many more years to harvest it if they don’t cut too short.

BILL: Thank you Ed. For Ag Talk this is Bill Rice along with Ed Lentz. Good morning to you.

Ed: Good morning.