

## When to cut alfalfa

Harvesting alfalfa to achieve the right balance of quality and yield depends on cutting the plant at the right stage.

“To get that first cutting harvested properly, harvest based on plant height,” says Randy Welch, national alfalfa agronomist with Croplan Winfield United. “Twenty-eight inches is the height you want to be cutting at. Depending on where you are, your crop might not hit that until May 20. If you’re farther north, it might be the first of June.”

Measure the height at the top of the plant, not the tip of the leaflet, says Dan Undersander, professor emeritus at the University of Wisconsin.

“Harvest at 28” to 29” to get the best compromise between yield and quality,” Undersander says. “Research shows a daily change of -0.25% crude protein, +0.36% acid detergent fiber and +0.43% neutral detergent fiber as alfalfa matures.”

