Environmental Quality Incentives Program
2013 EQIP Signup

Minnesota Supplement for:
Practice Standard 511 – Forage Harvest Management

Supplemental Criteria

1. **This practice is only available for the Organic Initiative.**
2. For delayed mowing scenario; after young have fledged, on or after August 1, the field will be harvested for dry forages. **No early spring harvest allowed. Acres of un-harvested hay land must have a minimum width of 100'. The same area of un-harvested hay land can be used for a maximum of 3 consecutive years.**

Scenarios

Organic Forage harvest management to optimize forage quantity and quality – dry (Moisture content less than 20%. Moisture content up to 30% only if preservatives are used according to manufacturer's recommendations)

Improved organic cultural practices and recordkeeping result in better forage quantity and quality for better livestock production performance. Timely cutting, harvest and removal of forage including preemptive harvest before pests can damage forage quality from field as hay, green-chop or ensilage. Promotes plant vigor, optimize yield and quality. Maintain stand longevity and desired species. If hay preservatives are used they must conform to organic certification standards. Typical scenario includes management of forage dry down for hay.

Organic Forage harvest management to optimize forage quantity and quality – Ensile (Includes green chop, wrapped bales for baleage, ensilage stored in bunkers, bags, or upright silos, moisture content dependant on storage method)

Improved cultural practices and recordkeeping result in better forage quantity and quality for better livestock production performance. Timely cutting, harvest and removal of forage from field as hay, green-chop or ensilage. Promotes plant vigor, optimize yield and quality. Maintain stand longevity and desired species. Typical scenario includes management of forage harvest and silo filling. .

Perennial Crops - Delayed Mowing for ground nesting birds

In perennial forage crops, the delaying the harvest of the first cutting to promote the reproduction of ground nesting birds. Delaying the harvest of the first cutting will benefit ground nesting birds; research at the University of Vermont showed that breeding success for declining grassland songbirds (e.g. Bobolink) went from 0 on a regularly harvested hay field to 2.8 fledglings per female per year when the first harvest on a hayfield was delayed until August 1st.

Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, and Savannah Sparrows require a nesting period to fledge young that lasts through the end of July in most parts of the eastern US. The delayed harvest results in a decrease in overall forage quality. Farmers could see as much as a 50% reduction in market value due to declines in protein (~50%) and digestibility (~20%), making the forage crop less palatable and lower in relative feed value. The selected fields should be large enough to promote ground nesting birds. After young have fledged, on or after August 1, the field will be harvested for dry forages.