

This article was presented the the September 6, 2001
Forage Management Training Session.

Improving Hay Drying Rates

Jeremy Sweeten

Purdue Agronomy Department

- Goal: To have 90% of the crop stem show some signs of a cracked stem or limpness to the stem.



Crimped Stem



Linear Crack

- No more than 5% of the leaves should show signs of bruising or blackening from conditioning. This is especially important when working with legumes such as alfalfa.
- Conditioning roll gap can be altered with the use of shims located on the roll stops. Refer to your owner's manual on how to set your specific machine.
- Conditioning roll pressure should also be adjusted so proper conditioning is taking place.
- Conditioning should be checked with every time you use the mower-conditioner. Variables such as stem diameter, plant moisture levels, and maturity level of the plants are always changing.
- Over conditioning will cost you money because excess leaf loss during the drying process will occur and reduce the overall yield and quality (RFV, protein, etc.) of the crop.

- Under conditioning will also cost you money because the increased risk of rainfall and the more mechanical manipulation of the hay is needed to get it dry.