

Alfalfa Weevils After First Cut

NEWARK, Del.— According to Joanne Whalen, cooperative extension integrated pest management (IPM) specialist at the University of Delaware, a larger-than-normal infestation of alfalfa weevils has resulted in significant damage to alfalfa in the Delmarva region.

Kent County Extension agriculture agent Gordon Johnson and Whalen have spoken to alfalfa growers in that county concerned about the lack of regrowth on alfalfa after the first cutting. Calls to central and southeastern Pennsylvania and Maryland's Eastern Shore confirm a similar situation there.

"Although the lack of regrowth has been attributed to everything from cultural practices and fertilizer to disease and herbicide injury, the IPM staff have pinpointed the primary culprit as alfalfa weevil feeding on the crown buds," Whalen said. "Fields harvested very early or very late appear to be regrowing normally, but those cut around May 15 are not."

Since regrowth for second cutting generally comes from the stem buds, new growth will appear slow because plants will now have to regrow from the crown buds. Most stands should survive this damage. Whalen predicts, adding that at least one cutting will be lost.

Whalen said that damage is most severe in areas in which weevil pressure was heavy before the first cutting and controls were not used. It appears that the damage was done soon after cutting. While larvae — the typical feeding stage of this pest — have already pupated, sometimes adults can be found feeding on crown buds as well. This type of damage, however, has not been seen since the late 1950s to early 1960s.

"It's been so long since this phenomenon has been seen that we weren't sure what we were up against. From literature of 40 years ago we've learned that larvae and adult alfalfa weevils can prevent or significantly delay regrowth," noted Whalen. "Favorable overwintering conditions and warm weather in March have combined to make for earlier and heavier weevil populations."

Since significant weevil populations have not surfaced in recent years, parasite populations may be lower, too, the IPM specialist said.

In order to minimize the damage to the stand, Whalen suggests delaying the second cutting for 35 to 38 days, allowing some flowering before harvesting. If weevils were present before harvest and the field was not sprayed, check immediately

after harvest for weevils feeding on new buds. Apply a treatment if one to two weevils per crown are found.

"Potato leafhopper damage on weakened plants will be more injurious than normal, so it is essential that growers also scout fields for potato leafhopper to prevent further stress to the stand," Whalen said. "Leafhoppers have been in the area since early May. We are starting to nymphs, which can quickly damage fields."

She advises scouting for potato leafhopper adults and nymphs as soon as regrowth is observed. Treatment thresholds are as follows:

- In alfalfa three inches or less, the treatment threshold is 20 per 100 sweeps.
- In alfalfa four to six inches tall, the treatment threshold is 50 per 100 sweeps.
- In alfalfa seven to 11 inches tall, the threshold is 100 per 100 sweeps.
- In alfalfa 12 inches or taller, the threshold is 150 per 100 sweeps.

If fields are extremely stressed, reduce these thresholds by one-third.

Les Vough, University of Maryland Extension agronomist and forage crop specialist, agrees with Whalen that regrowth damaged by alfalfa weevils should be cut at a 35- to 38-day interval.

"Keep in mind this means 35 to 38 days from the time regrowth begins, which may have been two to three weeks ago and just now is beginning to grow," he said. "Also, let the second cutting go to about 25 percent bloom, since plants must produce new growth from the crown buds. A summer drought is predicted, so extra recovery time will be beneficial, and an adequate fall recovery period will be more critical this year because of the damage."

For more information about the alfalfa weevil infestation, contact your county extension office.



NFO Dairy Members

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AMES, Iowa — Dairy Relief, Inc. (DRI), a charitable foundation, has forged an unprecedented relationship with another nonprofit Midwestern organization.

National Farmers Organization, serving America's farmers and ranchers since 1955, and its dairy producer-members, have donated more than \$250,000 to DRI, a gesture which not only helps undernourished people of the world, but also contributes to the well being of the nation's dairy farmers.

For two years, DRI has donated thousands of pounds of U.S. dairy products to alleviate hunger worldwide. In fact, DRI donations have reached people in Albania, Bosnia, Columbia, Haiti, Honduras, Kosovo, North Korea, the Palestinian West Bank, Romania and Uzbekistan. DRI works with other charitable relief organizations as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and USAID to arrange for the distribution of dairy products to the poor.

"National Farmers is quite pleased to be a part of this winning effort against hunger," said Gene Paul, national policy analyst for National Farmers who

also serves as president of DRI. "It's not often that one program significantly helps both the donor and the recipient in this particular way."

U.S. dairy farmers have recently been plagued by perceived oversupply and low prices. Several Midwestern producers, looking for a way to reduce supply and raise prices, fostered the idea of a charitable organization.

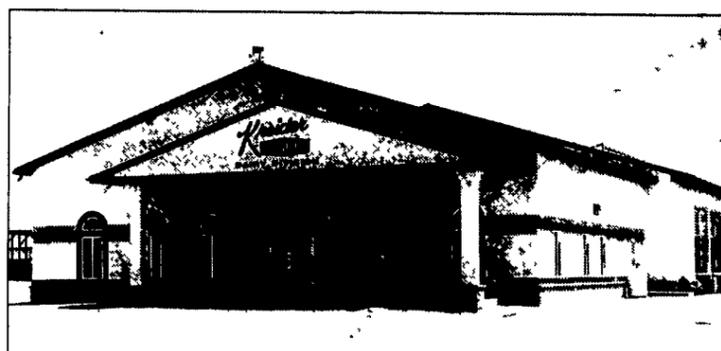
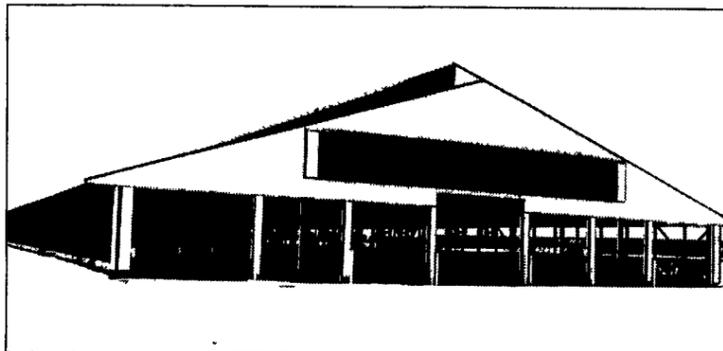
With the backing of National Farmers and other national dairy cooperatives, DRI was born. "We believe there is a niche that needs to be filled in terms of making sure that high-quality dairy products are donated to those in need," said Carl Baumann of Highland Ill., a dairy producer named executive director of DRI earlier this year. "No other relief agency or charity is focused exclusively on dairy product contributions, and that's DRI's great opportunity. I think that given the great nutritional value of milk and other dairy goods, we have a great product to offer those in need."

For more information about Dairy Relief, Inc., contact Carl Baumann at (618) 654-3676 or cjbaum@papadocs.com.

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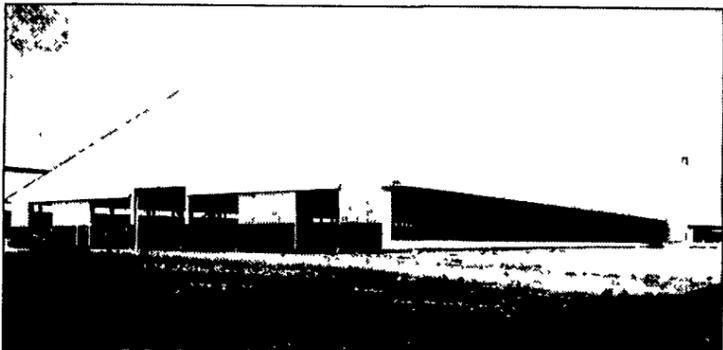


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