

Forage Management

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2024 Corn Silage: Location, location, location

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Despite all the variable and often extreme weather this season, the general narrative is of above average heat, and speculations of an early corn silage harvest. When looking at the growing degree day (GDD) accumulation for the growing season, locations across New York and the Northeast are well ahead of the 15- and 30-year averages. Using the [Climate Smart Farming Growing Degree Day Calculator](#) and data from locations across the state (with a May 10 example planting date) the season is 100 to 200 GDD's ahead of the 15-year average through August 10 (Table 1).

Comparing data from the last three growing season at Corn Silage Hybrid Evaluation Program locations gives a relative comparison of the 2024 crops progress (Table 2). The number of calendar days from planting to tasseling are lower than the previous two seasons, however, the difference varies by location. While this is expected as average GDD accumulation per calendar day is higher this year, the GDD's needed to reach tasseling also varies pointing to the influence of other growing season factors in the crops progress.

The story is slightly different when considering crop progress since tasseling. Regardless of what happens pre-tasseling, the corn crop needs a certain number of [growing degree days from tasseling to silage harvest](#) and that is where our attention should turn now. If you observed an earlier tasseling date, that certainly sets the stage for the potential of an earlier harvest; however, it is not a direct relationship. For example, if a field tasseled 10-days earlier than a "typical year", that does not directly translate to a 10-day earlier harvest date. The weather in late July and August will still influence how rapidly the crop matures and the locations selected for example in Table 1 already show how variable the post-tasseling conditions can be. While all locations reported were well ahead of average in GDD accumulation since planting, the progress since July 20 (example tasseling date) ranges for five GDD's behind the 15-year average (Canton, NY) to 62 GDD's ahead (Argyle, NY). Given the average number of growing degree days per calendar day, that already represents a difference of between zero and four calendar days.

As we move through August, it will be important to be prepared for the crop to reach harvest maturity earlier than normal, but it will be equally important to monitor actual crop progress and make harvest timing decisions based on target stage of maturity. Potentially a bit of a "hurry up and wait" scenario but better to be ready when the crop is ready.

Considerations and resources

- Review harvest plans with your team, including equipment, [safety](#) and [storage](#).
 - [Corn Silage Harvest Toolkit](#)
- Determine if [crop variability](#) (due to disruptions in planting window or other factors) necessitates a staggered harvest schedule and different [storage strategies](#).
- Understand differences in [plant and ear dry down](#) to refine harvest timing decisions.
- High rainfall during the growing season tends to negatively impact fiber digestibility. Across the region, the [2023 season](#) was a mixed bag for fiber digestibility. Based on weather patterns to date, it is unlikely fiber digestibility will be better in 2024. Be prepared for similar or lower digestibility in your 2024 corn silage and work with your nutrition team on how this will influence rations when you begin incorporating this corn silage into diets.

TABLE 1: Growing Degree Day (85/50) through August 10, 2024

Location	May 10 planting			July 20 tasseling
	15-year average	2024	Departure	2024 Departure from 15-year average
Canton, NY	1533	1664	131	-5
Lowville, NY	1353	1487	134	6
Aurora, NY	1597	1695	98	7
Oakfield, NY	1624	1728	104	9
Morrisville, NY	1509	1654	145	21
Homer, NY	1454	1611	154	26
Ellington, NY	1388	1496	108	28
Alburgh, VT	1545	1717	172	28
Willsboro, NY	1615	1806	191	35
Argyle, NY	1664	1830	166	62

TABLE 2: Comparison of corn crop progress by year, NY VT Corn Silage Hybrid Evaluation Program

Location	RM Group	Year	Planting Date	Tasseling Date	Harvest Date	Average DM at Harvest	Planting to Tasseling		Tasseling to Harvest		Planting to Harvest	
							GDD (86/50)	Calendar Days	GDD (86/50)	Calendar Days	GDD (86/50)	Calendar Days
Alburgh, VT	80-95	2022	13-May	22-Jul	12-Sep	34%	1151	70	980	52	2131	122
		2023	10-May	21-Jul	15-Sep	32%	1155	72	975	56	2130	128
	2024	7-May	15-Jul			1199	69					
	96-110	2022	10-May	25-Jul	21-Sep	33%	1273	76	1005	58	2278	134
		2023	10-May	24-Jul	22-Sep	31%	1212	75	991	60	2203	135
	2024	7-May	19-Jul			1283	73					
Aurora, NY	85-98	2024	21-May	18-Jul			1082	58				
	96-110	2022	13-May	21-Jul	8-Sep	32%	1154	69	978	49	2132	118
		2023	16-May	28-Jul	21-Sep	35%	1200	73	887	55	2087	128
	99-110	2024	21-May	22-Jul			1158	62				