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Hay Harvest Height

When estimating forage production (typically for grazing), we often use a figure for fertilized brome of somewhere between 300 and 350 pounds of dry matter per inch of height. If we apply that to hay production as well, it might be pretty tempting, particularly in a short hay year, to mow a little lower than we normally would. While it may end up yielding a little more in the short term (the quality of that forage could be argued, but that's another topic for another day...), it *could* end up costing you in the long term.

Most references would suggest a cutting height minimum of four inches. This allows for at least a little bit of ground cover while (hopefully...) leaving a small amount of green leaf area from which the plant can recover. When we remove a mass of top growth at one time like we do during a haying operation, we force the plant to recover using whatever green leaf area might be left in combination with energy in root systems. That combination does a pretty good job of allowing the plant to recover quickly, putting on new leaves and allowing the plant to continue to grow while replenishing root reserves as well. If we don't leave any green leaves, however, the plant has to rely wholly on root reserves for recovery, while leaving soils exposed and increasing the potential for moisture loss. *Can* it work? Sure. Is it optimum for the long-term health of the stand? Probably not.

If you haven't adjusted the cutting height of harvest equipment for some time, it might be a good idea to check it out. Modern equipment allows us to harvest almost as low as we want to harvest – but that doesn't mean we should. Make sure harvest height is appropriate to allow for rapid recovery while providing a little bit of cover to prevent moisture losses.

Tomato Diseases

If you broke down the challenges of growing tomatoes in to parts, our KSU *Tomato Leaf and Fruit Diseases and Disorders* publication (<https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/l721.pdf>) does it pretty well. In it, plant/fruit issues are divided in to fungal, bacterial, and physiological, each with a different management scheme.

For example, fungal diseases – like the ones we'll begin seeing soon – are often treatable. Management via cultural practice changes and/or fungicide applications can help prevent or slow diseases – even if they likely won't cure them.

Bacterial issues, on the other hand, are likely caused by the plants selected or the soil in which they are planted. Things like crop rotation and starting with clean seed can help on the front end, but if bacterial issues arise, there's little in-season you can do to do much good.

Then there are the physiological issues: blossom end rot, leaf roll, and growth cracks. They are often associated with soil moisture issues in combination with things like fertilizer rates or cultivar selection.

Not sure what you have? Check out the link above (or request a copy from any District Office) to start troubleshooting. There's no need to apply a fungicide for a physiological or bacterial issue. Likewise, if a fungal pathogen is the issue, cultural or chemical controls should be implemented sooner than later.