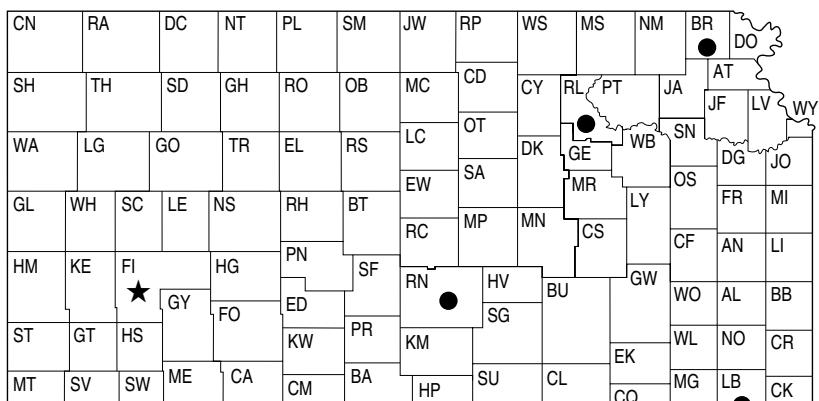




# 1997

## KANSAS PERFORMANCE TESTS WITH ALFALFA VARIETIES



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# 1997 KANSAS ALFALFA PERFORMANCE TESTS

## INTRODUCTION

### TEST OBJECTIVES AND PROCEDURES

The Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station established an official alfalfa performance testing program in 1980 to provide Kansas growers with unbiased performance comparisons on alfalfa varieties marketed in the state. Each year, private companies are asked to enter varieties voluntarily at the locations slated for establishment that year. Announcements and entry forms are mailed to private companies in June for entry in fall-seeded tests. Companies enter varieties of their choice and pay entry fees to cover part of the costs of conducting the tests. Most tests are planted in mid-August or September; however, the Southeast Kansas test usually is planted in the spring. Individual tests are conducted for a minimum of 3 or 4 years. New tests are established during the final production year of the previous test.

Alfalfa tests are currently in progress at 7 locations around the state. This year, no results are included from the Sandyland Experiment Field near St. John or the North Central Kansas Experiment Field near Belleville because of stand establishment problems or delays in 1995 and 1996. The other testing sites include the Southwest Research-Extension Center at Garden City, the Southeast Agricultural Research Center at Parsons, the South Central Kansas Experiment Field near Hutchinson, the Cornbelt Experiment Field near Powhattan, and the Agronomy North Farm at Manhattan.

Descriptive information is presented with the results for each test (Tables 1-5). This information, including soil type, establishment methods, fertilization, pest control, irrigation, harvest dates, and growing conditions unique to that location, can help explain test and/or variety performance.

FORAGE YIELDS were estimated by harvesting four replications of each variety with a plot

harvester. The amount of forage produced from a specific area ( $35\text{-}80 \text{ ft}^2$ ) was weighed, and a subsample was taken to determine moisture content. This information was used to convert the plot weights to tons of dry matter per acre for each cutting, the season total, and the total for each previous season as presented in Tables 1-5. The forage yield over the lifetime of a particular test is presented as the total tons of dry matter produced per acre, as the total tons of 15% moisture hay, and as a percentage of the test average.

At the bottom of each column, the Least Significant Difference (LSD) is listed at the 0.05 and 0.20 levels. These values indicate how large a difference is needed to be confident that one variety is superior to another. Differences between varieties that are equal to or greater than the 0.05 LSD have a 1 in 20 chance of not being real. Differences equal to or greater than the 0.20 LSD have a 1 in 5 chance of not being real.

The Coefficient of Variability (CV) provides an estimate of the consistency of the results of a particular test. In these tests, CV's below 10% generally indicate reliable, uniform data, whereas CV's of 10-15% are not uncommon and generally indicate that the data are acceptable for rough comparisons. Tests with CV's over 15% may still be useful, but variety comparisons lack precision.

The Mean Coefficient of Variability (MCV) is similar to the CV in that it serves as an indicator of test precision. The MCV is calculated by dividing the 0.05 LSD by the test mean (average) and multiplying by 100. The MCV reveals the percent difference required to detect differences between varieties with 95% confidence. Many alfalfa breeders and testers agree that tests with MCV values greater than 10% are of no benefit.

## 1996 STATEWIDE GROWING CONDITIONS

The 1997 harvest started earlier than last year but fell behind when rainfall delayed completion. Later cuttings reflected a similar pattern (Figure 1). Rainfall amounts and distribution were favorable for alfalfa production across southeastern, south central, and western Kansas. Topsoil moisture was surplus or adequate for much of the season, but periods of low topsoil moisture occurred in May, July, and September (Figure 2). Localized areas in northeast and north central Kansas were dry for most of the summer, limiting alfalfa production. (From Crop-Weather reports, Kansas Agricultural Statistics, Topeka).

Insect populations were active during the entire season. An army cutworm alert in early March was prompted by treatment-level infestations in south central and southwest Kansas. Blue alfalfa aphids, pea aphids, and alfalfa weevils reached damaging levels along the border with Oklahoma in late March and early April. Freezing temperatures in late April reduced populations dramatically. Aphid and weevil populations remained low through early summer. Potato leafhoppers caused heavy damage in June and July in fields scattered across the state. Leafhoppers and aphids were observed in alfalfa

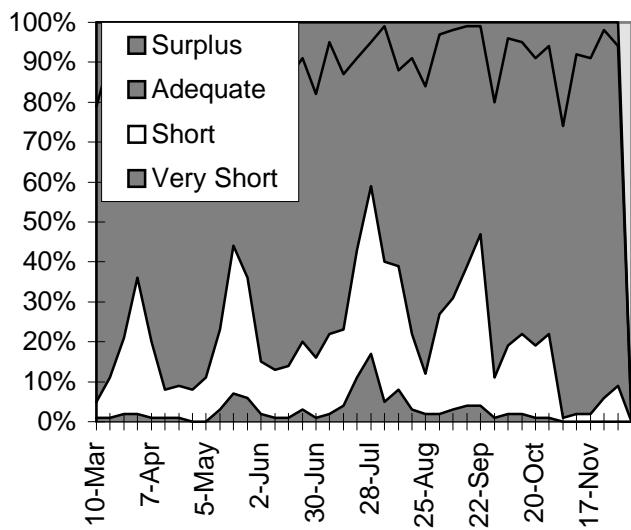


Figure 2. Statewide topsoil moisture status.

fields as late as mid-October. (From Cooperative Economic Insect Survey, Kansas Department of Agriculture).

Foliar diseases increased in incidence and severity during April and eventually caused defoliation in many fields in early May. Spring black stem and Lepto leaf spot caused the most damage. East central, southeast, and south central Kansas were affected most severely. As usual, foliar diseases were of minor importance

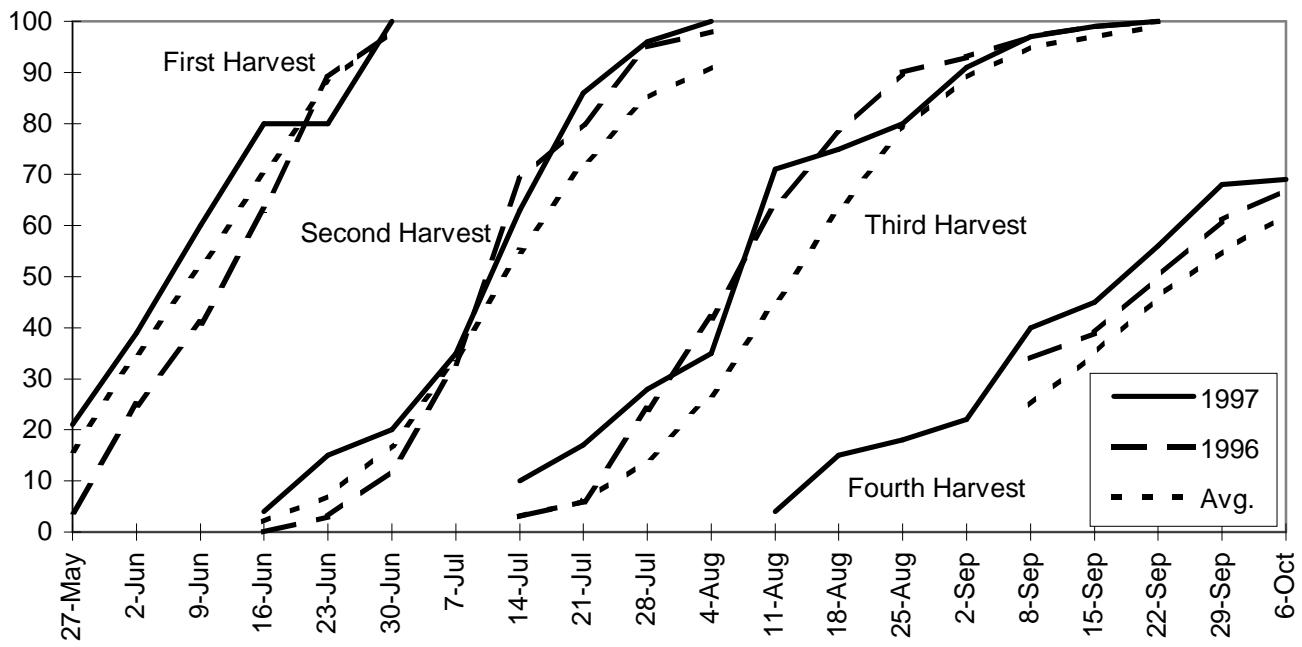


Figure 1. Statewide alfalfa harvest progress.

after the first harvest. (From Plant Disease Survey Reports, Kansas Department of Agriculture).

The November 10 Kansas Agricultural Statistics report predicted total 1997 alfalfa hay production of 3.66 million tons from 850,000 acres. This is up from 3.44 million tons produced from 800,000 acres in 1996. The predicted average yield of 4.3 tons per acre equals the 1996 average yield.

For those interested in accessing crop performance testing information electronically, try our World Wide Web site: <http://www.ksu.edu/kscpt>. The information contained in this publication and more are available for viewing or downloading. Contact Kraig Roozeboom for alfalfa test information on disk or via e-mail. Text and tables can be sent in a variety of formats (e.g., ASCII, Excel, dBase).

## VARIETY CHARACTERIZATION

For variety selection, producers should consider the performance of a variety in each of the current tests where it appears, its performance over time and locations relative to familiar or check varieties, and the disease and insect resistance characteristics that are potentially

important in their situation. Tables 1-5 contain updated yield data from individual tests currently in progress. The appendix contains additional descriptive information and marketing contacts for all varieties included in the 1997 Kansas Alfalfa Performance Tests. Fall dormancy, disease resistance, and insect resistance ratings were provided by developers of each variety and were reviewed by the Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies (AOSCA) National Alfalfa Variety Review Board (NAVRB). The Certified Alfalfa Seed Council uses that information to publish its annual Fall Dormancy & Pest Resistance Ratings for Alfalfa Varieties, which was used as the source of the information in the appendix.

Fall dormancy values are based on the fall canopy height measured in Minnesota. Dormancy values often are related to the speed of regrowth. The rapid regrowth types have higher values, and the slower regrowth types have lower values.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Cooperation of Research Center and Experiment Field personnel who furnished land and performed many or all of the field operations is sincerely appreciated.*





















## ELECTRONIC ACCESS

For those interested in accessing crop performance testing information electronically, try visiting our World Wide Web site. Most of the information contained in this publication is available for viewing or downloading. The URL is <http://www.ksu.edu/kscpt>.

Excerpts from the

### UNIVERSITY RESEARCH POLICY AGREEMENT WITH COOPERATING SEED COMPANIES\*

Permission is hereby given to Kansas State University to test our varieties and/or hybrids designated on the attached entry forms in the manner indicated on the test announcement. I understand that all results from Kansas crop performance tests belong to the University and to the public and shall be controlled by the University so as to produce the greatest benefit to the public. It is further agreed that the name of the University shall not be used by the company in any commercial advertising either in regard to this agreement or any other related matter.

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**NOTE: Trade names are used to identify products. No endorsement is intended, nor is any criticism implied of similar products not named.**