GRASS HARVEST IS ARRIVING!!!

Although that should not be a surprise. It arrives at the about the same time every year— even though we had minimal growth during April. Day-length affects perennial grass maturity the most.

*For the plant that I checked*
(You need to check your own fields for accuracy.
*There can be a week’s difference in maturity among varieties within a grass species.*)

Check the weather and find your harvest window. Once the growing point/seed head of side shoots is 4 inches above the soil surface, harvest at the first opportunity for dairy quality feed.

Split the grass stem with a knife to find the seed head. Or, feel the stem between your thumb and index finger to feel a bulge in the stem—that is the seed head.

READY FOR HARVEST
*Orchardgrass*—is in the flag leaf to heading stage
*Reed canarygrass*— flag leaf stage

(continued)
Orchardgrass in the flag leaf stage (one stage before boot stage)

Orchardgrass early heading stage

Not Yet Ready For Harvest:
Tall Fescue—seed head is just an inch above the soil surface
Smooth Bromegrass—seed head is just an inch above the soil surface
Timothy—seed head is at the soil surface


Winter Rye Maturity—The larger winter rye plant in this picture is in the flag leaf stage, ready for harvest. The smaller plant is one growth stage behind, not yet in the flag leaf stage (when the last leaf emerges). To correct what I said in a previous Ag Report, day-length affects maturity of perennial grasses the most, with temperature playing a minor role, but in annual grasses (like winter rye) temperature does play a major role, rather than a minor role.

(continued on the next page)
Corn and Rye Cover Crops: There are a number of ways to manage cover crops and corn planting. If you have not established your own system, the start with a small acreage and experiment. *Once rye is taller than your knee, it will require extra nitrogen to properly decompose and not steal nitrogen from the corn crop.*

I have listened to farmer do all the following successfully:

- Plow down the cover crop when it is knee high. Do seedbed prep and plant after one week.
- Apply herbicide when the rye is knee high and plant.
- Let the rye grow above the knee, spray, and no-till plant.
- Plant into the green rye at any height, then apply herbicide
- Wait for the rye to begin pollen shed, then roll it with a roller/crimper, then no-till plant
- Use roller/crimper row attachments on the planter and roll/crimp & plant in one operation.

My suggestion is to begin simple and develop a system you like from there.