

# How To Make Western Quality Haylage Despite Northeast “Quality” Weather

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## Making The Transition To Zone-Tillage

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to mow hay in the morning and chop it that same afternoon? Some farmers around western New York no longer wonder about it because they are doing it. Lawnel Farms in York, New York has a good handle on how to make hay in one day. Generally the mowers start around 11 am. The windrows are then tilled out into a thin layer of hay, once the ground between the windrows has dried. This operation alone removes approximately 4% of the moisture. In most cases this field is then ready to be merged and chopped by 2:30 or 3:00 pm. Lawnel uses the Miller Pro merger that picks up roughly 30 ft. of width. This merger can pick up that thin layer of hay left by the tedder. Once the hay is merged, the chopper finishes the job. Through the adoption of this system, very little hay was rained on during 1<sup>st</sup> cutting. Lawnel Farms will usually only mow what they can handle in a day. Therefore, hay is not left on the ground when those “scattered showers” pop up. But as the old saying goes, “You have to see it to believe it.”

That is why Western New York Crop Management Association is hosting a Hay Mowing and Conditioning Demonstration Day on August 25, 2004. This event is geared toward making high quality haylage during challenging weather patterns. We will demonstrate the equipment described above, as well as a number of other less expensive pieces of equipment for smaller sized operations, including smaller mowers, rotary rakes, and mergers. Tom Kilcer of Cornell Cooperative Extension in Rensselaer County will speak about research he has done comparing spread swath windrow hay making versus narrow windrow haymaking. The event will be held at one of Lawnel Farms’ fields on the corner of River Rd, and Mt. Pleasant Rd., just east of State Rte. 36, in the Town Of York. Registration for the event will begin promptly at 9am. Lunch will also be provided at no charge.

After lunch we will also visit Thornapple Farms before heading back to the hay field for the final merging and chopping demonstrations. At Thornapple Farms we will view the results of Zone-Building on root development and growth, by view root pits in fields that were vertically tilled with a Zone-Builder. The only way to truly assess the benefits of a practice such as Zone-Building is to dig a root pit, and see just how deep the roots grew. We will also see how Thornapple Farms uses BMR Corn in combination with conventional varieties to improve the overall quality of their corn silage.

So if either of these topics pique your interest, please RSVP to Lori or Bonnie in the WNYCMA office at 585-237-5831, because we need a tentative head count for lunch. **\*\*\*Please note that plans are subject to change due to the “fabulous” weather of Western New York. We may stay in the hay field for lunch, depending on how fast**

**the hay dries.**\*\*\* Please see the enclosed map and agenda for more detailed information about the locations and timing of each event. In the event of rain we will look at the equipment, and then head to our lunch location where Mr. Kilcer will give his presentation. We will then serve lunch, and head to Thornapple Farms to view the root pits.

Once the days events are finished, David DeGolyer and David Shearing will be leading an optional tour to Dueppengiesser Dairy Co. to view some more root pits comparing conventional tillage with Zone-Tillage, with an Aerway attachment. Let us know if you are interested when you RSVP.

Overall, we are trying to demonstrate several innovative practices that dairy producers can utilize to reduce costs and improve forage quality and yield, in the challenging climate of Western New York. With narrow margins in today's dairy economy, every dollar saved goes directly to your bottom line. So please don't hesitate to call with any questions or comments, and we look forward to seeing you on August 25<sup>th</sup>.



The picture at left is an example of Lawnel Farms' Tedding operation. The tedder was used at a neighbors' farm where second cutting had been rained on. Instead of waiting a few days for the windrow to dry out, and taking the chance on another shower, the hay was almost dry that day, and was actually chopped the very next morning.

The picture to the right is an example of the OxBo/Miller Pro Merger. You can see its full width pickup head. It will pick up a 30 ft. swath of hay.

