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### Grass Seed Production

#### STUDY OF SEED MOISTURE CONTENT AND HARVESTING

Many years of experience with a single grass are needed to determine the exact time to swath the seed crop. An error in judgement can result in heavy seed yield losses through shattering of overripe seeds. Seed moisture content can provide a guideline for proper swathing time.

Sawki Russian wildrye, because it behaved in a typical manner during the study, will be used here as an example. Between July 21 and July 25 the weight of seed increased slowly. Then on July 25 the seed weight started to increase sharply, reaching a maximum on July 29. During the same eight-day period, moisture content dropped and the dockage also declined. Two days later, on July 31, moderately heavy shattering occurred and this triggered a drop in yield, a drop in the weight of 1000 kernels and an increase in the amount of dockage, because many of the best seeds had fallen to the ground. Germination also dropped, again because many of the best seeds had been lost.

Broad guidelines indicated by research to date would suggest the following optimum moisture content for the entire seed head as a measure of when to swath field:

Group 1 - moisture content 35-40%.

Creeping red fescue  
Crested wheatgrass  
Orchardgrass  
Siberian wildrye

Group 2 - moisture content 40-45%.

Russian wildrye  
Timothy  
Streambank wheatgrass

Group 3 - moisture content 45-50%.

Needlegrass  
Oatgrass  
Tall fescue  
Meadow fescue  
Kentucky bluegrass

Group 4 - moisture content 50-55%.

Tall wheatgrass  
Intermediate wheatgrass  
Reed canarygrass  
Perennial ryegrass  
Bromegrass

Group 5 - moisture content 55-60%.

Creeping foxtail

Group 6 - moisture content 60-65%.

Pubescent wheatgrass

These figures are based on the moisture content of the entire seed head clipped off at the base of the lowest seed branch.

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