

IOWA - Profitability Data for Foliar Fungicide Use in Alfalfa Production

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As hay prices fluctuate, alfalfa growers should regularly evaluate the potential profitability of using foliar fungicides in alfalfa production. Research clearly shows a higher probability to profit from the use of foliar fungicides in first-crop alfalfa than for the other cuttings, but hay price, disease presence, weather conditions, and overall yield potential all play a roll. That is what 12 Iowa State University (ISU) research trials in four years – and two more trials so far this year – appear to show.

A four-year summary (http://farms.ag.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/FoliarFungicideAlfalfa_0.pdf) estimates what hay prices needed to be to break even from the use of fungicides on alfalfa (see Table 3 in pdf) assuming the yields and treatment costs in the trials. With established stands, breakeven hay value for first, second, third, and fourth crops were \$84/ton, \$180/ton, \$190/ton, and \$263/ton, respectively, assuming \$22/ac fungicide and \$6/ac application costs. Calculating those values used hay yields of about 8 tons/ac at 15% moisture – which are very good yields. In the same table, we also provided theoretical figures on what the breakeven would be with 20% lower hay yields.