

Alfalfa Report

1-27-05

Winter irrigation: Alfalfa water use from November through February averages about 3.5 inches per month in the low elevation desert areas. Winter rainfall cannot usually sustain maximum production in these areas and some supplemental irrigation is required. If we assume an irrigation efficiency of 0.7, then a single 5-inch irrigation every month can meet alfalfa water requirements during the winter on average. The actual irrigation requirement depends on soil type, weather conditions, rainfall, growth of the crop, and other factors. Growers sometimes use the winter as a time to replenish subsoil moisture and apply more water than is actually required by the crop during this time of the year.

Insect Management: Blue alfalfa aphid is a serious pest during the winter and spring months in the low desert. Blue alfalfa aphid is distinguished from pea aphid by uniformly dark antennae. Pea aphids have lighter antennae with dark bands at each joint. The blue alfalfa aphid first appears in December or January when it may be more abundant than pea aphid. Both species are common throughout the spring, but pea aphid is more heat tolerant and may persist into early summer. In susceptible alfalfa varieties, blue alfalfa aphid may stunt growth and infested plants have smaller leaves, shorter internodes, leaf curling, yellowing, and leaf drop. Several species of predacious bugs and parasitic wasps attack these aphids. Sample alfalfa fields weekly when aphids appear, then every 2 to 3 days as numbers approach the treatment threshold of 40 to 50 blue alfalfa aphids per stem.

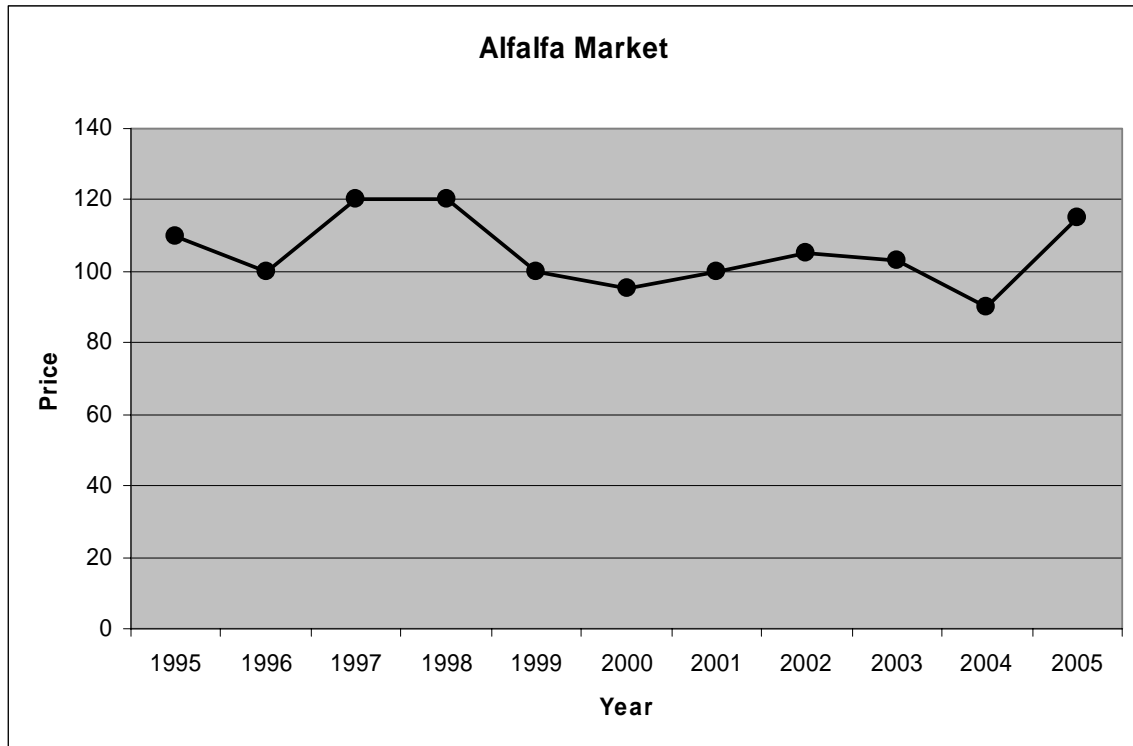
Weed Control: Now is the time to apply preemergent herbicides for the control of summer annual weeds. Remember that it is better to be a month early than a day late.

| <u>Market Summary</u> | <u>High</u> | <u>Low</u> | <u>Average</u> | <u>Offgrade</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Past 2 weeks | 120 | 100 | 115 | 80-95 |
| Last year | 115 | 80 | 90 | 65-75 |

10 Year Summary

2005 - 115
2004 - 90
2003 - 103
2002 - 105
2001 - 100

2000 – 95
1999 – 100
1998 – 120
1997 – 120
1996 – 100
1995 – 110



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