

# Alfalfa Report

7-28-05

**Summer Slump:** is well-known by alfalfa growers as the decrease in yields that normally occurs each summer in Arizona. Yield decline with later harvests in the season occurs in most alfalfa-growing regions of the world. Factors responsible for summer decline may include temperature, day length, water stress, aging, and depletion of food reserves in the plant. The rate of maturation of the crop is probably a primary factor responsible for summer decline. In other words, the crop produces a seed head so fast that time is not available to accumulate yields similar to the spring. Summer slump can not be avoided in Arizona, but maintaining adequate soil moisture levels can slow yield decline. Also, increasing the cutting interval for one harvest during the late summer is recommended to promote the health of the stand during this stressful time of year.

**Weed Control:** EPTAM and Balan are the only herbicides registered for preplant use in alfalfa. Both can reduce seedling numbers and slow stand establishment. These are the only options, however, for growers wanting to keep weeds from coming up with seedling alfalfa.

**Cutting height:** The optimum cutting height for alfalfa varies from about 2 to 4 inches. As cutting height is increased, more growth occurs from buds originating on the stems and less from the crown. Stem buds are less productive than crown buds, so increasing cutting height often reduces yields. However, crown bud development is suppressed if alfalfa is cut at early stages of growth or on a frequent basis. In these cases, lack of crown bud development can be compensated for somewhat by increasing the cutting height and encouraging more regrowth from the stems. A cutting height of 3 inches resulted in prolonged stand life compared to a 1 inch cutting height in an Arizona study. Crop quality can be manipulated with cutting height since the lower part of the plant is poorer in quality than the top.

<u>Market Summary</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Offgrade</u>
Past 2 weeks	125	100	112	90-100
Last year	95	70	80	60-70

## 10 Year Summary

2005 - 112

2004 - 80

2003 - 58

2002 - 82

2001 - 78

2000 - 63

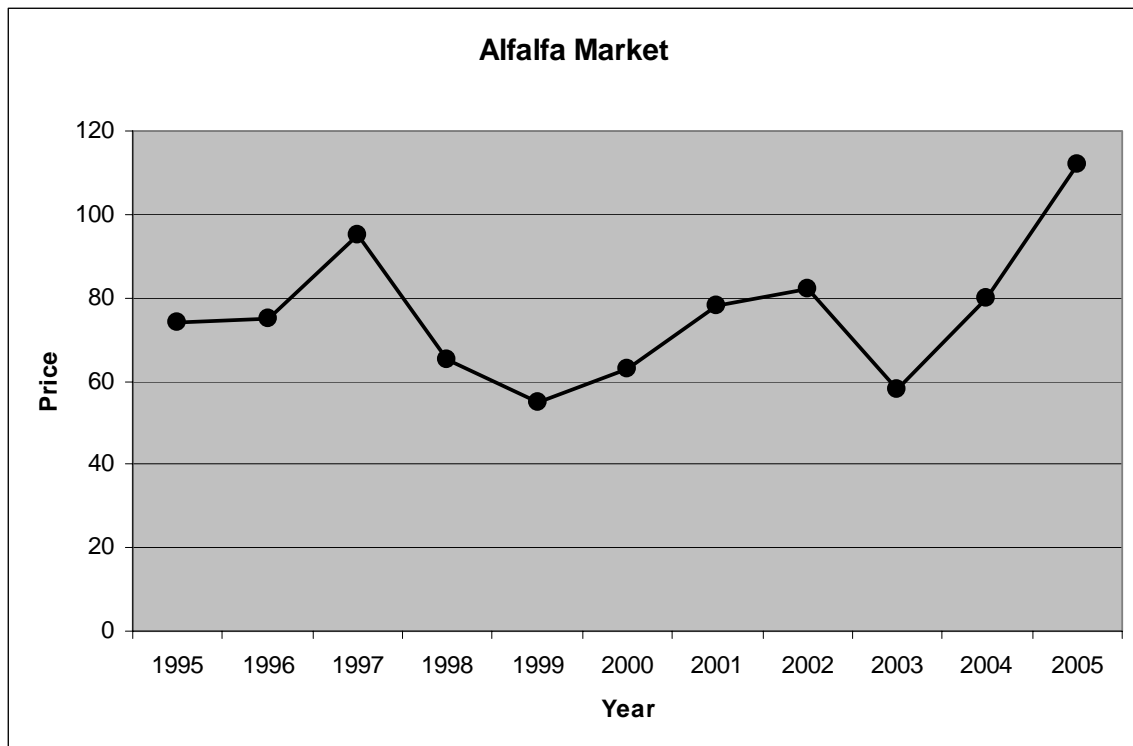
1999 - 55

1998 - 65

1997 - 95

1996 - 75

1995 - 74



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