



The 2019  
**New Mexico**  
**Alfalfa Variety**  
Test Report



Agricultural Experiment Station  
**College of Agricultural, Consumer  
and Environmental Sciences**



# The 2019 New Mexico Alfalfa Variety Test Report

Leonard Lauriault, Ian Ray, Chris Pierce, Koffi Djaman, Robert Flynn, Mark Marsalis, Samuel Allen, Charles Havlik, Gasper Martinez, and Margaret West<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

In 2019, 170,000 acres of alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*) were in production in New Mexico, which was a 10,000 acre decrease from 2018, which was 10,000 acres less than 2017. Hay production was estimated at 918,000 tons reflecting 5% increase in yield/acre. At a January through August 2019 average of \$246/ton (up from \$215/ton in 2018), estimated gross returns from alfalfa hay produced in 2019 will total nearly \$227 million, a \$30 million increase over 2018. Besides its value for hay, alfalfa also is the legume of choice in irrigated perennial pastures. Whether used as pasture or hay, the value of alfalfa to New Mexico is greatly magnified by its contribution to livestock production and receipts from the sale of meat, milk, and other products generated by livestock enterprises. Choosing a good alfalfa variety is a key step in establishing a highly productive stand of alfalfa, whether for hay or pasture. Differences between the highest- and lowest-yielding varieties in established irrigated tests included in this report ranged from 1.11 to 1.61 tons per acre in 2019. If sold as hay, this translates to a potential difference in returns of \$273 to \$396 per acre due to variety, or an increase of at least \$46 million for the industry in 2019 alone.

This report, which is a collaborative effort of New Mexico State University scientists at agricultural science centers throughout the state, provides yield data for alfalfa varieties included in yield trials in New Mexico. While consistently high yields compared to other varieties over a number of years and locations within a region is the best indication of varietal adaptation and persistence, other factors should be considered in the variety selection process (see NMSU's Cooperative Extension Service Circular 654, Selecting alfalfa varieties for New Mexico). In addition to fall dormancy and winter hardiness, high levels of pest resistance are critical to protecting an alfalfa stand for long-term production. Alfalfa grown in New Mexico should have at least a resistant (R) rating for bacterial wilt, Fusarium wilt, anthracnose, Phytophthora root rot, spotted alfalfa aphid, blue alfalfa aphid, pea aphid, stem nematode, and southern rootknot nematode. Seed quality also should be high. Selecting an alfalfa variety based on seed cost is a gamble producers often lose. To be assured of achieving a long-lasting, highly productive stand, buy either certified or Plant Variety Protected (PVP) seed, which guarantees the genetics and performance. The best choice of seed of any variety is one that was treated with a fungicide and nitrogen-fixing bacteria before it was bagged.

## Description of Tests

Replicated alfalfa variety tests included in this report were conducted under research controls at NMSU's Agricultural Science Centers at Artesia [2016 (late summer planted) and 2018 (spring planted)], Los Lunas (2016), and Farmington (2018). Weather data for 2019 and the long-term averages from all locations are presented in table 1.

Yield data (on a dry matter basis) are presented in tables 2-5. Varieties are listed in order from highest to lowest average annual production. Yields are given by cutting for 2019 and by year for each production year. Statistical analyses were performed on all alfalfa yield data (including experimental entries) to determine if the apparent differences are truly due to variety or just to chance. The variety with the highest numerical yield in each column is marked with two asterisks (\*\*), and those varieties not significantly different from that variety are marked with one asterisk (\*). Those are the varieties from which to make an initial selection. Otherwise, to determine if two varieties are truly different, compare the difference between the two varieties to the Least Significant Difference (LSD) at the bottom of the column. If the difference is equal to or greater than the LSD, the varieties are truly different in yield when grown under the conditions at a given location. If NS is given for the LSD, there was no statistical difference between the highest and lowest yielding varieties. The Coefficient of Variation (CV), which is a measure of the variability of the data, is included for each column of means. Low variability (<20 percent) is desirable, and increased variability within a study results in higher CVs and larger LSDs. There might be a difference between previously published data and the data given in this publication for the same tests because of differences in the programs used for statistical analysis.

Table 6 summarizes information about proprietors, Roundup Ready genetics, fall dormancy, winter survival (measured in the northern United States), pest resistance, and yield performance across years and locations for all varieties currently included in NMSU's alfalfa variety testing program. For information about other varietal characteristics, such as grazing, salt, or traffic tolerance or GMO traits besides Roundup Ready® genetics, check the National Alfalfa and Forage Alliance website for the Alfalfa Variety Leaflet (<https://www.alfalfa.org/varietyLeaflet.php>). In Table 6, varieties are listed alphabetically by fall dormancy category. As in the data tables, the variety with the highest numerical yield in each column is marked with two asterisks (\*\*), and those varieties not significantly different from that variety are marked with one asterisk (\*). Remember good performance across several years and locations is the best indicator of broad adaptation, pest resistance, and persistence.

Seed labeled "common," "variety not stated," or "variety unknown", particularly that from other states, is of unknown genetic background and may or may not have the necessary disease or insect resistance. New Mexico Common and African Common seed used in all tests throughout the state has come from the same supplier and seed fields in New Mexico. Seed purchased from other dealers may or may not be of the same quality and performance.

---

<sup>1</sup>Forage Crop Management Scientist and Superintendent, NMSU Agricultural Science Center at Tucumcari; Alfalfa Breeder, NMSU, Las Cruces; Forage Research Scientist, NMSU, Las Cruces; Agronomist, NMSU Agricultural Science Center at Farmington; Extension Agronomist, NMSU Agricultural Science Center at Artesia; Extension Forage Specialist, NMSU Agricultural Science Center at Los Lunas; Agricultural Research Scientist, NMSU Agricultural Science Center at Farmington; Senior Research Assistant, NMSU Agricultural Science Center at Los Lunas; Agricultural Research Assistant, NMSU Agricultural Science Center at Tucumcari; and Agricultural Research Scientist, NMSU Agricultural Science Center at Farmington, respectively.

## Summary

Consistent production of high alfalfa yields is the result of selecting good varieties and implementing good management techniques. Soil fertility should be maintained at recommended levels based on soil tests, irrigation should be properly applied, weeds and insects should be controlled using appropriate cultural and/or chemical methods, and harvest management should allow sufficient time to restock root energy prior to winter. For dormant (FD 1 to 3) and semidormant (FD 4 to 6) varieties, a 6-week rest period before a dormancy-inducing freeze (27°F) is recommended to allow plants to replenish root reserves for winter survival and initiate spring growth, after which harvesting might be done either mechanically or by grazing. Non-dormant (FD 7 to 9) varieties also might benefit from this rest period. Removing fall growth is beneficial to reducing weevil populations the following year as eggs are laid in and overwinter in stems. Harvesting established stands at early bloom would result in 3 to 5 cuttings per year before initiation of the rest period in most areas of New Mexico. More dormant varieties might not produce yields that can be baled during the rest period; however, these can still be grazed. For

additional information about alfalfa management, refer to the other NMSU Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service publications listed in table 7.

## Acknowledgements

The authors express appreciation to the following for their significant contribution to The New Mexico Alfalfa Variety Testing Program by helping with planting, maintaining, harvesting, or other data collection, and data entry: Dallen Begay, Nathan Begay, Jason Box, Patty Cooksey, Josh Foster, Lorenzo Gallegos, Christopher Hill, Jared Jennings, Shane Jennings, Jonah Joe, Martin Lopez, Ruben Pacheco, Tom Place, Dennis Price, Lena Salas, Franklin Jason Thomas, and the staff at University Marketing and Communications who make publications such as this possible. Salaries and research support were provided by state and federal funds appropriated to the New Mexico Agricultural Experiment Station. Federal funds included those appropriated through the Hatch Act of 1887.

**Table 1. Temperature and precipitation data for 2019 and the long-term averages for the New Mexico Alfalfa Variety Test locations.**

Location Elevation Latitude	Artesia 3366 ft. 32° 45' N				Los Lunas 4840 ft. 34° 46' N				Farmington 5640 ft. 36° 41' N			
	Temp. (°F)		Precip. (in.)		Temp. (°F)		Precip. (in.)		Temp. (°F)		Precip. (in.)	
Month	2019	Avg.	2019	Avg.	2019	Avg.	2019	Avg.	2019	Avg.	2019	Avg.
Nov-18	46	49	0.23	0.83	40	44	0.11	0.46	37	41	0.06	0.64
Dec-18	27	40	0.77	0.67	33	35	0.50	0.52	32	31	1.4	0.48
Jan-19	41	40	0.13	0.43	32	35	0.56	0.38	30	30	0.56	0.51
Feb-19	47	45	0.00	0.43	38	40	0.41	0.41	33	36	0.99	0.49
Mar-19	51	52	0.31	0.39	50	47	0.33	0.47	47	44	1.32	0.62
Apr-19	61	60	0.44	0.59	56	55	1.46	0.47	55	51	0.31	0.59
May-19	69	70	0.33	1.30	60	63	0.40	0.47	55	60	1.93	0.57
Jun-19	77	78	2.00	1.61	72	73	0.53	0.55	67	70	0.29	0.26
Jul-19	83	80	1.12	1.65	79	77	1.13	1.37	74	76	0.31	0.83
Aug-19	85	79	0.65	1.97	78	75	0.44	1.69	75	74	0.07	1.00
Sep-19	77	71	1.69	1.85	71	67	0.53	1.18	68	66	0.53	1.07
Oct-19	58	60	3.86	1.22	53	56	0.64	1.04	48	54	0.16	0.92
Annual	60	60	11.53	12.94	55	56	7.04	9.01	52	53	7.93	7.98

**Table 2. Dry matter yields (tons/acre) of sprinkler-irrigated alfalfa varieties sown September 16, 2016, at NMSU's Agricultural Science Center at Artesia†.**

Variety Name	2017 Total	2018 Total	2019 Harvests					2019 Total	3-Yr Average
			8-May	17-Jun	26-Jul	12-Sep	23-Oct		
SW7408	9.41**	8.28*	0.94*	0.95*	1.76**	2.23**	1.42*	8.28*	8.38**
NuMex Bill Melton	9.16*	8.22*	1.15**	0.93*	1.58*	2.15*	1.01*	8.22*	8.06*
African Common	8.05*	8.45**	1.07*	1.16*	1.70*	1.96*	1.45*	8.45**	7.98*
HybriForce-3600	8.67*	8.42*	0.78*	0.93*	1.58*	2.05*	1.12*	8.42*	7.91*
SW8412	8.09*	8.20*	0.97*	1.38**	1.52*	1.96*	1.17*	8.20*	7.79*
SW8476	8.29*	7.96*	0.90*	0.98*	1.34*	1.92*	1.28*	7.96*	7.57
Zia	7.64*	7.77*	0.65*	0.94*	1.56*	2.21*	1.48*	7.77*	7.48
SW7473	7.78*	7.64*	0.78*	1.17*	1.38*	1.70*	1.73**	7.64*	7.36
MS sunstra 155204	7.99*	8.06*	0.77*	0.98*	1.34*	1.56*	1.60*	8.06*	7.35
SW8409	8.08*	7.75*	0.64*	0.78*	1.47*	2.18*	1.26*	7.75*	7.33
New Mexico 11-1	7.63*	7.98*	0.73*	0.71*	1.75*	2.21*	1.09*	7.98*	7.29
NM Common	7.36*	7.71*	0.68*	0.82*	1.56*	1.84*	1.39*	7.71*	7.18
55VR08	7.78*	7.70*	0.80*	0.93*	1.21*	1.43*	1.13*	7.70*	6.99
Dona Ana	7.82*	6.67*	0.47*	1.07*	1.24*	1.78*	1.08*	6.67*	6.67
Mean	8.13	7.92	0.81	0.98	1.50	1.94	1.30	7.92	7.52
LSD (0.05)	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	0.73
CV%	10.50	9.93	44.80	30.38	26.89	19.31	28.42	9.93	10.27

†Data were analyzed using analysis of covariance where check plots of AmeriStand 803T were used as the covariate. 2017 Harvest dates: 16-May, 22-Jun, 21-Jul, 24-Aug, and 16-Oct.

2018 Harvest dates: 8-May, 6-Jun, 3-Jul, 6-Aug, and 17-Sep. No 6th harvest was taken due to excessive precipitation.

\*\*Highest numerical value in the column.

\*Not significantly different from the highest numerical value in the column based on the 5% LSD.

NS means that there were no significant differences between the varieties within that column at the 5% level.

**Table 3. Dry matter yields (tons/acre) of sprinkler-irrigated alfalfa varieties sown April 18, 2018, at NMSU's Agricultural Science Center at Artesia†.**

Variety Name	2019 Harvests‡					2019 Total
	16-May	26-Jun	30-Jul	13-Sep	24-Oct	
SW7473	1.81*	1.24*	1.12*	0.99*	0.41*	5.68**
Zia	1.62*	1.18*	1.22**	1.04**	0.47*	5.59*
SW7408	1.84**	1.24*	1.10*	0.96*	0.45*	5.47*
SW8476	1.69*	1.29**	1.08*	0.97*	0.49*	5.32*
SW8412	1.54	1.19*	1.14*	0.93*	0.56*	5.30*
SW8409	1.72*	1.13*	1.01*	0.98*	0.38*	5.27*
Dona Ana	1.43	1.15*	1.04*	0.89*	0.47*	5.16*
NM Common	1.17	1.16*	1.19*	0.95*	0.65**	5.14*
African Common	1.07	1.11*	1.05*	0.96*	0.55*	4.77
HybriForce-3600	1.32	1.20*	0.99*	0.75*	0.45*	4.70
SW8421S	1.36	1.07*	0.92*	0.71*	0.45*	4.57
Hi-Gest 660	1.11	1.22*	0.88*	0.86*	0.40*	4.35
Mean	1.47	1.18	1.06	0.92	0.48	5.11
LSD (0.05)	0.29	NS	NS	NS	NS	0.71
CV%	13.69	14.49	16.26	20.60	22.81	9.66

†Data were analyzed using analysis of covariance where check plots of Pioneer 55VR08 were used as the covariate

‡Two harvests taken in 2018 are not reported due to excessive weeds.

\*\*Highest numerical value in the column.

\*Not significantly different from the highest numerical value in the column based on the 5% LSD.

NS means that there were no significant differences between the varieties at the 5% level.

**Table 4. Dry matter yields (tons/acre) of flood-irrigated alfalfa varieties sown September 20, 2016, at NMSU's Agricultural Science Center at Los Lunas†.**

Variety Name	2017 Total	2018 Total	2019 Harvests				2019 Total	3-Yr Average
			10-Jun	10-Jul	30-Aug	22-Oct		
Roadrunner	6.57*	7.46**	2.35*	1.62*	1.60*	0.88**	6.45*	6.82**
WL 454HQ.RR	6.70*	7.18*	2.43**	1.63*	1.61*	0.77	6.43*	6.77*
NM14BMHS1	6.83*	7.14*	2.15*	1.67*	1.63*	0.83*	6.28*	6.75*
NM14MaIHS3	6.59*	7.13*	2.37*	1.53	1.70*	0.87*	6.46**	6.72*
AmeriStand 715NT RR	7.03**	6.79	2.24*	1.58*	1.75**	0.74	6.31*	6.71*
NuMex Bill Melton	6.62*	7.16*	2.26*	1.55*	1.68*	0.86*	6.34*	6.71*
Artesian Sunrise	6.78*	7.15*	2.15*	1.50	1.69*	0.83*	6.16*	6.70*
Meadowlark	6.73*	7.13*	2.04	1.63*	1.72*	0.75	6.14*	6.67*
SW 7473	6.32*	7.29*	2.24	1.67*	1.70*	0.77	6.39*	6.66*
msSunstra 155204	6.41*	7.16*	2.33*	1.69**	1.56	0.82*	6.40*	6.66*
Transition 6.10 RR	6.29*	6.93	2.31*	1.57*	1.71*	0.85*	6.44*	6.55*
HybriForce 2600	6.20	7.07	2.33*	1.61*	1.62*	0.80*	6.35*	6.54*
NM14ALWLHQ	6.17	7.11*	2.34*	1.61*	1.56	0.77	6.27*	6.51
Dona Ana	6.51*	6.97	2.17*	1.48	1.56	0.73	5.94	6.48
Stratica RR	6.32*	6.93	2.18*	1.45	1.59*	0.88**	6.10*	6.45
WL 440HQ	5.95	6.96	2.22*	1.64*	1.60*	0.88**	6.34*	6.42
Archer III	6.41*	6.56	2.24*	1.58*	1.75**	0.70	6.28*	6.42
msSunstra 155206	6.41*	7.00	1.90	1.54*	1.54	0.84*	5.82	6.41
SW 7408	6.44*	6.72	2.19*	1.47	1.51	0.88**	6.05	6.40
WL 552HQ.RR	6.08	6.74	2.24*	1.60*	1.63*	0.80*	6.27*	6.36
Six Shooter RR	5.83	7.03	2.05	1.69**	1.68*	0.78	6.19*	6.35
Malone	5.95	6.71	2.17*	1.42	1.57	0.76	5.92	6.19
Tonnica RR	5.97	6.69	2.23*	1.53	1.41	0.73	5.90	6.19
Hi-Gest 660	5.59	6.92	2.08	1.62*	1.53	0.80*	6.03	6.18
NM Common	5.54	6.65	2.15*	1.61*	1.74*	0.73	6.22*	6.13
WL 372HQ.RR	6.04	6.61	1.92	1.46	1.57	0.76	5.71	6.12
AmeriStand 855T RR	5.75	6.53	1.95	1.62*	1.70*	0.75	6.01	6.10
NM14BM1008251	6.10	6.32	1.81	1.33	1.38	0.82*	5.34	5.92
Mean	6.29	6.93	2.18	1.57	1.62	0.80	6.16	6.46
LSD (0.05)	0.76	0.39	0.29	0.16	0.19	0.09	0.37	0.30
CV%	8.61	4.00	9.34	7.04	8.46	8.34	4.27	6.03

†Data were detrended using nearest neighbor analysis and analyzed using analysis of variance.

2017 Harvest dates: 6-Jun, 18-Jul, 1-Sep, and 6-Nov.

2018 Harvest dates: 1-Jun, 3-Jul, 5-Aug, 12-Sep, and 7-Nov.

\*\*Highest numerical value in the column.

\*Not significantly different from the second highest numerical value in the column based on the 5% LSD.

**Table 5. Dry matter yields (tons/acre) of sprinkler-irrigated alfalfa varieties sown August 28, 2018, at NMSU's Agricultural Science Center at Farmington†.**

Variety Name	2019 Harvests			2019 Total
	17-Jun	24-Jul	3-Sep	
Ranger	4.57**	2.62*	2.32*	9.51**
FSG 423ST	3.87*	3.10*	2.48**	9.44*
SW3407	3.86*	3.16*	2.42*	9.43*
6422Q	3.94*	2.99*	2.47*	9.40*
FSG 426	3.78*	3.05*	2.38*	9.21*
FSG 415BR	3.87*	3.04*	2.26*	9.17*
WL 365HQ	3.92*	3.00*	2.18*	9.09*
SW4107	3.31	3.20*	2.32*	8.82*
SW5207	3.78*	2.84*	2.20*	8.82*
FSG 403LR	3.33	2.85*	2.35*	8.52*
Lahontan	2.84	3.38**	2.27*	8.48*
WL 377HQ	3.36	2.60*	2.41*	8.37*
FSG 524	3.39	2.78*	2.05*	8.22*
NM Common	2.93	2.84*	2.43*	8.19*
6585Q	2.96	2.87*	2.34*	8.17*
AmeriStand 518NT	2.90	2.88*	2.27*	8.04*
Mean	3.54	2.95	2.32	8.80
LSD (0.05)	0.93	NS	NS	NS
CV%	18.42	11.00	10.69	10.26

†Data were detrended using nearest neighbor analysis, and analyzed using analysis of variance.

\*\*Highest numerical value in the column.

\*Not significantly different from the highest numerical value in the column based on the 5% LSD.

NS means that there were no significant differences between the varieties at the 5% level.







**Table 7. New Mexico State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service publications related to alfalfa management.**

Number	Title
A-123	Sampling for plant tissue analysis
A-129	Nitrogen fixation by legumes
A-130	Inoculation of legumes
A-131	Certified seed
A-137	Soil analysis: A key to soil nutrient management
A-145	Certified noxious weed free program
A-146	Appropriate analysis for New Mexico soils
A-229	Phymatotrichum root rot
A-325	Managing weeds in alfalfa
A-326	Downy mildew on alfalfa
A-333	User manual of the alfalfa yield predictor
A-334	Beet armyworm in New Mexico Hay
A-335	Variegated cutworm in New Mexico Hay
A-336	Managing Roundup Ready alfalfa and conventional or organic alfalfa hay in nearby fields in New Mexico
A-337	Recommendations for Roundup Ready alfalfa weed management and stand removal in New Mexico
A-338	Alfalfa weevil control options in New Mexico
A-339	Alfalfa integrated pest management: Aphids
H-158	How to collect and send plant specimens for disease diagnosis
CR-536	Blister beetles in alfalfa
CR-633	Using a computer application to predict irrigated alfalfa yield
CR-641	Hay quality, sampling and testing
CR-644	Assessing alfalfa stands after winter injury, freeze damage, or any time renovation is considered in New Mexico
CR-646	Managing alfalfa during drought
CR-654	Selecting alfalfa varieties for New Mexico
CR-659	Whitefringed beetle in New Mexico alfalfa
CR-668	Reducing harvest and post-harvest losses of alfalfa and other hay
CR 682	GMO Crops in New Mexico agriculture
RR-766	Furrow-irrigated alfalfa dry matter yield is not affected by different seeding rates in the Southern High Plains, USA
RR-772	Observations on how cowpea aphid affects alfalfa

These publications, and alfalfa variety test reports from previous years, are available from your county office of the NMSU Cooperative Extension Service or online at <http://forages.nmsu.edu/resources.html> and [aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/](http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/)



**New Mexico State University**  
**BE BOLD.** Shape the Future.

---

The College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences is an engine for economic and community development in New Mexico, improving the lives of New Mexicans through academic, research, and Extension programs.

New Mexico State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer and educator. NMSU and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.