



Alfalfa Winter Survival 2015

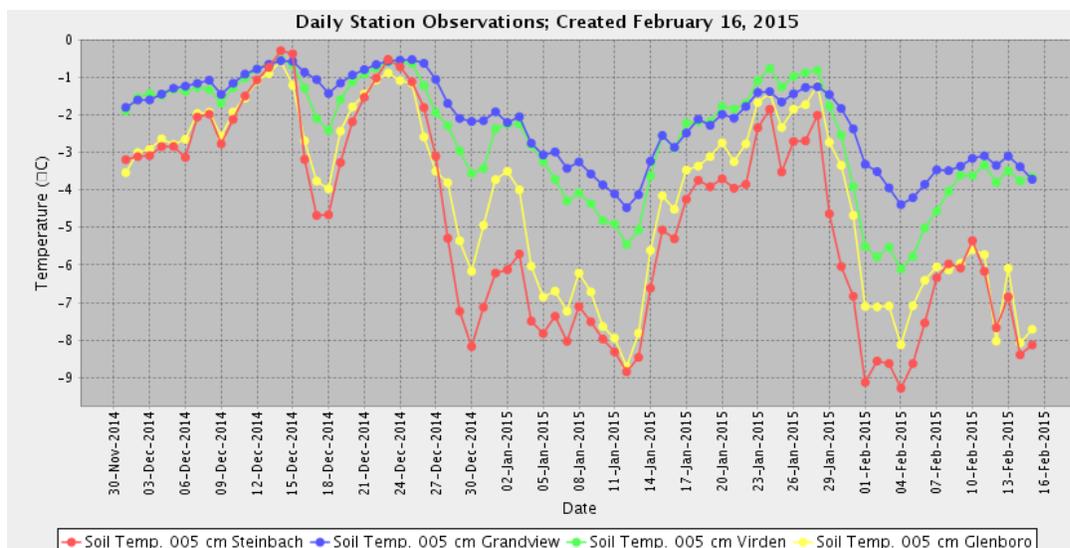
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Every year forage producers have concerns about whether or not their alfalfa will survive the winter. The most common weather related cause of winter injury is extremely low or fluctuating temperatures. In an article in the Dec 2013 edition of e-Bulletin, I described how alfalfa plants are injured or killed during the winter and some of the recommended practices that may help to reduce the risk of winter injury:

<http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs198/1106253726668/archive/1115922401663.html#LETTER.BLOCK12>

So far, the winter of 2014-15 has been somewhat normal in regards to temperatures which, under most conditions, would leave us to believe that alfalfa stands should be holding up fairly well to date. Looking at the soil temperatures across the province from December to the middle of February, we can see they have on at least 3 occasions (one just recently) dropped very close to what is considered a critical level in the Steinbach and Glenboro areas. It is important to know that these weather stations for monitoring soil temperatures are located in areas where there is undisturbed standing crop so that the site collects snow to help insulate the soils. Even under these conditions, snow cover levels have been reduced enough to allow soil temperatures to approach critical levels.

The critical temperature for winter survival of alfalfa is -12 C. The concern this year is for fields that may have lost snow cover during the warmer spells so that adequate snow cover to insulate the crop during the cold snaps in late December and early February wasn't present.



If you would like to check past soil temperatures in your area go to <http://agriculture.alberta.ca/acis/mb-weather-data-viewer.jsp> and find a weather site close to your operation.