Scald in Alfalfa

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Scald is damage that occurs to alfalfa associated with high temperatures and soil saturation. Scald is likely to occur when the soil is saturated for 30 hours or more and the maximum air temperature is greater than 100 F during the saturation period. Damage can occur at lower temperatures following longer periods of saturation. Diseases caused by parasitic organisms do not progress as fast as scald. Plants injured by scald become yellow and wilt within a week. The vascular tissue of the root or the entire root becomes brown. The roots usually emanate a putrid odor. Scald can be controlled by providing drainage, leveling fields, and avoiding standing water on ends of fields. Plants with foliage are much less susceptible to scald, so delaying irrigation until at least 4 inches of growth appears is probably the most effective control.

Scalded areas near the end of an alfalfa field where water accumulates.