

The Saskatchewan Hay Report

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Sask. Forage Council

August, 2001

Saskatchewan Haying Progress

(For the week ending Aug. 5, 2001)

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food Crop Reports No. 16 and No. 19.

In the dry areas through the west and central portions of the province, some moisture has fallen and may allow for the possibility of a second cut of hay in some areas. First cut yields are still much reduced from last year (only 40-50% of last year's yield) due to extremely dry conditions during most of the spring and summer (Table 2). In general, timing of first cut haying operations were more normal and were 1-2 weeks earlier than last year, when wet weather delayed the start of hay cutting.

In southern crop districts (CD 1-4), 87% of the first cut hay crop is baled or silaged, with only 8% lying in the swath and 5% left standing. Quality is expected to be fair to good, and some of the standing hay is losing quality as it becomes "over-mature" (Table 1). Work on the second-cut hay crop is getting underway with just over 8 % cut or baled.

In central crop districts (CD 5-7), topsoil moisture conditions are improved on hay and pasture land although almost three-quarters of reporters still rate conditions as

poor. The hot weather of the last week has caused the crop to wilt and deteriorate somewhat. The first-cut hay crop is 94% baled or silaged, with quality expected to be fair to good. Some activity has begun on the second-cut crop, with just over 3 % cut and 3% baled. Only a few areas expect to harvest a second cut.

In northern districts (CD 8-9), the first-cut hay crop is 94% baled or silaged, with an expected quality of fair to good. There is more silage (5%) being produced in northern areas. Quality of first-cut hay is generally better than last year. Work on second-cut hay has begun in some areas and timely rainfall and warm temperatures over the last 1-2 weeks has improved the chances for a promising second-cut of alfalfa. Two percent of the second-cut fields have been cut, 3 % have been baled and 1% have been silaged. Topsoil moisture conditions have improved slightly throughout most northern regions, with poor conditions showing up mainly in northwestern areas. Due to sufficient moisture and heat, re-growth of alfalfa fields has been rapid, and quality is expected to be good. Some producers were finding it difficult to retain leaves during haying operations because of the dryness and heat.

Table 1 – Provincial Hay Summary (First Cut)

		1st	Cut %				Quality **		
	Uncut	Cut	Baled	Silaged	Excel	Good	Fair	Poor	NR
South	4.8	7.6	84.8	2.6	3.6 (3) *	41.7 (35)	42.9 (36)	6.0 (5)	6.0 (5)
Central	2.9	2.9	90.7	3.6	2.4 (2)	50.0 (42)	35.7 (30)	10.7 (9)	1.2 (1)
North	1.6	4.9	88.6	5.0	9.8 (4)	53.7 (22)	19.5 (8)	7.3 (3)	9.8 (4)
Prov.	3.4	5.2	87.9	3.5	4.3 (9)	47.4 (99)	35.4 (74)	8.1 (17)	4.8 (10)

* number of producers reporting

**quality statistics are for the week ending Aug. 5, 2001

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Table 2 – Provincial Hay Yield – Dryland Production (t/ac) *

	Alfalfa	Br/Alf	Clover	Other Tame	Wild	Greenfeed
South	0.93	0.93	1.19	0.66	0.70	1.22
Central	0.80	0.70	0.99	0.64	0.76	1.16
North	0.59	0.57	0.76	0.58	0.86	0.86
Prov.	0.77	0.76	0.97	0.63	0.70	1.08

* Yield statistics are from the week ending July 15, 2001

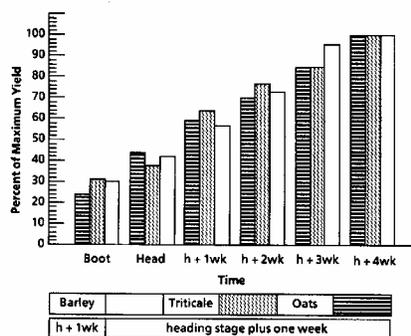
Staging Greenfeed for Cutting

*Allan Foster, Rangeland Agrolgist,
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When to cut greenfeed is a question that many non-traditional greenfeed growers are asking this year. Drought conditions over a large part of the province have resulted in crops with low yield potential. As a result, some producers are considering salvaging crops for greenfeed in a hope to take advantage of the strong livestock feed market or to feed to their own herd.

With greenfeed as with hay, the quality at cutting will significantly influence the quality of the subsequent feed. Cutting at the late milk to early dough stage generally optimizes both quality in terms of protein and energy, and forage yield

The graph below from the Alberta Silage Manual shows yields of barley, oats and triticale cut at weekly intervals after heading. **Heading in this case is described as 50 % of the heads on the main tiller are above the boot.**

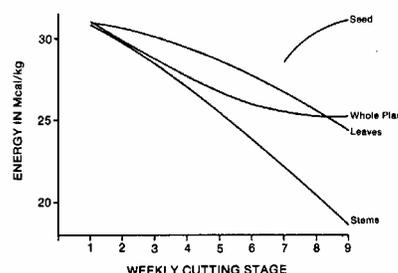


Dry matter yield of these crops was maximized at heading +4weeks, which corresponds to the early dough stage of oats, watery dough stage of triticale and the soft dough stage of barley.

Cutting at two weeks after heading, which corresponded to the early milk to watery dough stage of these crops, resulted in only about 70- 75% of the dry matter yield that would have been obtained if the crops were harvested four weeks after heading.

Digestibility and protein generally decline as plants mature. This is the case for cereal crops as they develop from the boot to the hard dough stage. The two graphs below are also from the Alberta Silage Manual. They illustrate the decline in protein and energy in oats as it matures from the boot (stage 3) to heading (stage 4), early bloom (stage 5) late bloom (stage 6) milk (stage 7), dough (stage 8) and ripe seed (stage 9).

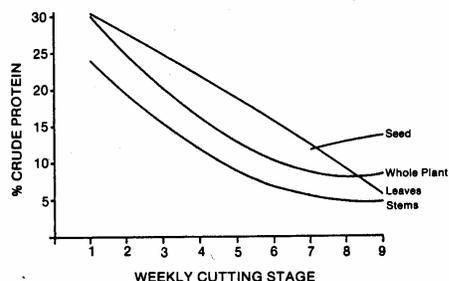
The graphs below show that cutting at an earlier stage than when maximum yield is reached will result in feed with a higher energy and protein content than cereals cut later. This effect is greatest on the stem and leaf components of the plant.



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Another consideration of greenfeed is palatability. As cereals mature and ripen, the straw will be less palatable to cattle. As a result, wastage may increase. Cutting at an earlier stage such as milk stage will improve palatability of stems. Cutting at an earlier stage is also recommended for triticale and barley varieties that have rough awns.

Dry growing conditions will also influence cutting stage. Under very dry conditions, plant growth slows and leaf loss will occur. As a result, in these conditions, cereals should be harvested to preserve as much dry matter as possible regardless of the stage.

There is a trade-off when cutting greenfeed. Cutting at the soft dough stage generally provides a satisfactory combination of yield and quality. However higher quality and better palatability can be obtained by cutting at an earlier stage but this will be at the expense of yield.

2001 Hay Sales and Prices

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A combination of reduced yields in the first hay cuts throughout most of Saskatchewan and strong demand from southern Alberta and Montana have put upward pressure on

hay prices. Many livestock producers from Alberta locked in supplies of 2001 hay from Saskatchewan earlier this spring. This has resulted in tight hay supplies in many areas of Saskatchewan. Reports were received of alfalfa hay from last year's crop being marketed to Alberta for \$40 per 1200 lb. bale. Even hay from 1999 was being sold for \$20 per 1200 lb. bale.

Prices for the 2001 crop are variable depending on the quality and type of hay and the availability of greenfeed or straw. Dairy quality feed will be the highest this year and dairies will be the most active in the market. An earlier call from an Alberta buyer purchasing standing alfalfa mix stated that he expected to pay \$20-\$25 per standing ton of 65% feed. If hay prices get too high, then a ration of \$25/ton straw and \$3.00/bu. barley becomes more economic to feed. The asking price for dairy quality feed in and around Edmonton is 4 to 5 cents a pound FOB the farm. Cutting for greenfeed has been widespread this year and generally reflects the price of barley grain. Expect Alberta greenfeed prices of at least 3 cents a pound. Prices for hay delivered to Lethbridge are as follows:

- Greenfeed - \$100 - \$110/ton
- Grass hay - \$115 - \$145/ton
- Grass/alfalfa or alfalfa hay
- \$130 - \$145/ton
- Good quality dairy hay - \$160/ton

Montana prices are higher due to a \$40/ton subsidy for producers. Trucking costs are higher, however.

Locally, prices are strong as well. A recent tender for baled green feed (AC Crystal wheat) in Melfort went for 2.5 cents a pound. Baled hay is being delivered to Maple Creek from the northeast for \$100/ton and there were reports of 1500 lb. large round bales were selling for \$100 apiece.

With trucking costs of approximately \$30/ton, baled hay in the northeast may now be worth \$70-\$100/ton. There have been other reports of good quality alfalfa hay is selling for as much as \$80/ton.

Prices for standing hay have been more difficult to determine and depend on hay type, yield, quality and date of cutting. If hay is worth \$70/ton then standing hay is probably worth about \$40/ton. This assumes a cost of \$30/ton for cutting, baling and an allowance for risk. If yields are 1.0 ton/ac. then the standing crop is worth about \$40/ac.; at 1.5 tons/ac. then the standing crop is worth \$60/ac. The results of Ducks Unlimited hay tenders throughout the province reveal a wide range of prices received for their standing hay. These are mostly grass or grass/alfalfa hays. With average yields of 1.0 ton/ac., prices were as follows:

- Saskatoon – high \$50/ac., average \$20 - \$30/ac.

- Wadena - high \$46/ac. average \$21/ac.
- Melfort – high \$32/ac. average \$12/ac.
- North Battleford - high \$48.50/ton, average \$30 - \$35/ton.
- Regina – high \$50/ton, range \$40-\$50/ton

A tender for standing oat cover crop cut for green feed in Yorkton had a price range of \$1.15 - \$17.50/ac. (approx. 1/10 to 1 cent per pound). The lower prices for these fields was reflective of the lower seeding rate and reduced yields for the oats.

Producers who have hay to sell or buy are encouraged to list their product on several of the hay listing services available. These include:

SAF Feed and Forage Listing Service:
www.agr.gov.sk.ca/feedforage/

AAFRD Ropin the Web on the General Store Site:

www.agric.gov.ab.ca/store/haylist.html

The Saskatchewan Hay Report is published monthly from July-October by the Saskatchewan Forage Council. Comments and suggestions are appreciated. If you wish to be placed on an electronic mailing list or have articles and suggestions for upcoming issues, please send them to the editor:

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