

The Saskatchewan Hay Report

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Saskatchewan Forage Council

June 2004

Saskatchewan Haying Progress

(for the week ending June 28, 2004)

SAFRR Crop Report No. 13



Haying progress is finally getting underway in many regions with approximately two per cent of the 2004 hay crop cut and less than one per cent baled or silaged. Early dry conditions, frost and then cool, wet weather has delayed haying progress by at least a week to ten days compared to 2003. General haying activity began by the last week of June in southern areas and first week of July in northern areas. Quality is expected to be good to excellent in most southern regions, as well as east central and northeast districts. West central and northwest regions can only expect fair to good quality hay crops due to

lower amounts of precipitation. Many grasses, particularly smooth brome grass, appeared yellowish (most likely N deficiency) this spring and some stands even had purple margins (probably P deficiency). Some of this can be related to cold stress with the plants unable to take up sufficient nutrients for sustained plant growth. However, much of it is probably related to soil type and low levels of available nutrients in the soil. Insect and other pests have been a problem in some districts with reports of grasshoppers and Richardson ground squirrels (gophers) damaging crops.

Table 1 – Provincial Hay Summary (First Cut)

		1st	Cut %				Quality **		
	Uncut	Cut	Baled/Silaged		Excel	Good	Fair	Poor	NR
Southwest	97.0	3.0			16.0	17.1	3.0	0.0	64.0
Southeast	98.0	2.0			(16)*	(7)	(3)	(0)	(64)
West Central	97.0	3.0			2.3	11.4	11.4	1.1	73.9
East Central	99.0	1.0			(2)	(10)	(10)	(1)	(65)
Northwest	99.0	1.0			2.0	24.0	2.0	0.0	72.0
Northeast	98.0	2.0			(1)	(12)	(1)	(0)	(36)
Prov.	98.0	2.0	0.5		8.0	16.4	5.9	0.4	69.3
					(19)	(39)	(14)	(1)	(165)

* number of producers reporting **quality statistics are for the southern, central and northern crop districts for the week ending June 20, 2004 (no report available for the week of June 28, 2004)

Flexible Forage Management Strategies

Janice Bruynooghe, Executive Director – Saskatchewan Forage Council, Saskatoon

Whether managing forages within a grazing system or for hay production, it is important to build in the ability to be flexible in your year-to-year

management strategies. The past few years have brought a number of challenges including drought, grasshoppers and feed shortages to a number of areas across the province and while we can't change these realities, we can work to be flexible and adapt to what is thrown our way.

Within a grazing system, the main goal is to balance forage supply with grazing animal demand. In times of drought and pasture shortages, this balancing act can become extremely difficult. However, there are management strategies that can be implemented to deal with forage shortages. The use of annual cereals such as barley, oats, triticale or fall rye may be one option to supply forage throughout the grazing season. Most importantly, seeded annuals provide managers the flexibility to make grazing decisions based upon current conditions while also taking pressure off perennial pastures and hay resources. Seeding dates can be selected to provide forage growth at a time of the season when needed. As well, if environmental conditions provide more than adequate growth, portions of the seeded crop may be harvested for greenfeed.

Spring-seeded winter cereals are often chosen for grazing purposes as they remain vegetative in the year of seeding and if managed properly, may also provide some grazing in the following year. Annual cereals should reach 6 inches of growth prior to grazing and then with periods of rest and a rotational system, several grazing periods may be achieved. One management tool for grazing annuals includes staggering seeding dates on individual paddocks to provide a supply of quality forage throughout the growing season.

Forage update from S.W. Saskatchewan

*Trevor Lennox, Rangeland Agrologist,
SAFRR, Swift Current.*

The forage crops were late starting this spring due to unfavourable growing conditions early in the season. However around the middle of May the rain started

The successful management of seeded annuals is largely dependent upon proper grazing strategies, just as with perennial forages. Timing of grazing and provision of rest periods is a land manager's most valuable tool. Rest and recovery allows a plant to replenish its reserves and prepare itself for the next grazing event. Healthy plants will be much more resilient during periods of stress.

Just as with grazing resources, the management of hay crops can include a number of strategies to allow for flexibility from year to year. Planned cutting dates and periods of rest and recovery can ensure that hay stands are maintained in a healthy, productive state. Cutting once per year rather than taking two cuts during dry periods will allow more time for the plants to recover and provide greater overall production in the long-term. Avoiding late summer and early fall harvest will allow for standing material to trap snow and reduce soil temperature fluctuations. As well, adequate time will occur for plants to rebuild root reserves prior to entering the winter months.

The key to dealing with year-to-year variability is the development of a long-term forage management plan. By implementing good management strategies and flexible options, you will be prepared for the ups and downs that are bound to occur.

and we have been doing very well since then in terms of precipitation.

The alfalfa crops have responded the most to the moisture received in May and June. Some producers who graze their alfalfa/grass mixes are extra cautious this year because of the abundance of alfalfa relative to the grass.

The trend continues towards more land being taken out of annual cropland and put into perennial forage. With the abundance of moisture there has been more forage planted during the month of June this year than in many other years. Usually by the time June comes many producers in S.W.

Saskatchewan would not consider seeding forage at this time, however the moisture situation in June has given producers an opportunity to get some forage established this year.

The threat of grasshoppers still looms over the heads of many producers this summer. Grasshoppers are the greatest threat to any newly seeded forage crop that hasn't had

Saskatchewan Forage Seed Development Commission (SFSDC)

Submitted by Gord Pearse

Seed of perennial forage crops have been harvested for a hundred years in Saskatchewan, initially only for personal or regional requirements. Fifty years ago seed marketers looked at producing forage and turf seed for eastern Canada and Europe, and forages have played a key role in soil conservation and improvement. Forage seed production has since evolved to the core business of some producers and global seed companies. Some crop kinds are produced entirely for the export market, while others remain in Saskatchewan to be used by our livestock producers or conservation agencies.

The intent of the Saskatchewan Forage Seed Development Commission is to have the legislation in place in 2004, with the check-off eligible by July 1, 2005. The levy dollars will help to provide for the research and development needs of all forage, turf, and amenity crops, **with the exception of alfalfa**. Alfalfa is by far the most important

time to establish yet. However the cool wet weather we have been experiencing in May and June should help to lower the potential for grasshopper damage.

It's very early to try and speculate on the price of feed at this time. However in judging by the supply it looks like we will have an average to above average feed supply in S.W. Saskatchewan, which should translate into average to slightly below average feed prices.

This is a year where fertilizer inputs on forage crops paid off well due to the abundance of moisture in May and June.

forage seed crop in Saskatchewan, and alfalfa seed producers have participated in a production levy, the SASPDC, since 1997.

A feasibility study was conducted in 2002-2003 to assess the mood of producers and processors for developing a commission for forage seed crops. Included in the study was a "needs assessment" survey of research required, as well as suggestions for information dissemination and levy collection. Producers and processors generally agreed that there was a need, and would support a commission, and an implementation study was drafted for 2003-2004.

The purpose and intent of the SFSDC is to assist the development of the forage seed industry in Saskatchewan, by the following means:

- to promote and develop the forage seed industry in the Saskatchewan;
- to develop procedures to maximize returns to producers of forage seed;

- to encourage sustainable production of a uniform high-quality product;
- to gather, compile and distribute information related to the production, consumption and marketing of forage seed;
- to conduct of encourage research on the production, processing and consumption of forage seed; and
- to establish a levy on all forage seed for the purpose of carrying out the objectives of the plan.

Producer money is essential in today's research environment. While provincial and federal spending on agriculture has been reduced, funds for research are generally available, but have to be matched with producer money.

What crops are included?

The following list was developed upon the initiation of the development commission, and includes all major and some very minor species used for forage, turf seed, or reclamation purposes. It is subject to change as our production practices and market opportunities change.

Crested wheatgrass
 Meadow brome grass
 Intermediate wheatgrass
 Smooth brome grass
 Pubescent wheatgrass
 Hybrid brome grass
 Slender wheatgrass
 Timothy
 Streambank wheatgrass
 Western wheatgrass
 Northern wheatgrass
 Tall wheatgrass
 Hybrid wheatgrass
 Dahurian wildrye grass
 Russian wildrye grass
 Altai wildrye grass
 Canada wildrye grass
 Reed canarygrass

Annual ryegrass
 Perennial ryegrass
 Hybrid ryegrass
 Creeping red fescue
 Hard fescue
 Chewings fescue
 Tall fescue
 Meadow fescue
 Kentucky bluegrass
 Fowl bluegrass
 Sweet clover
 Red clover
 Alsike clover
 Birdsfoot trefoil
 Cicer milkvetch
 Sainfoin
 Black medic

All grades are subject to levy collection, including Foundation 1 & 2, Registered 1 & 2, Certified 1 & 2, Common 1 & 2, Reject, and no grade, and shall also include seed purchased as a seed mixture. Breeder seed will not be included.

Current research priorities

A research needs assessment survey was prepared as part of the input from Saskatchewan's producers and processors. The majority of respondents agreed that production research was their greatest need, with weed control issues a top priority. This would include methods of applications, economic tolerances, and minor use registrations of pesticide products. Other major production issues cited were fertility, stand establishment, and harvest management.

With such a large list of crops covered by the levy, and a rather small budget, it will be a continual challenge to spread the producer dollars to address as many projects as possible. Every attempt will be made to work with other provincial organizations to avoid duplication and stretch available

funds. Research results will be disseminated to the check-off participants when that information becomes available.

The Levy collection process

The check-off will be collected in the same manner as all other producer check-offs, at first point of sale. All grades and crops listed above are eligible to the check-off. Seed buyers, who are often the processors as well, are responsible to check-off the appropriate levy, and submit the funds to the Commission. Seed buyers of Saskatchewan produced seed will be mailed all the appropriate information with regards to registration and submission requirements. If producers market their own processed production to other producers, or market outside of Canada, it is their responsibility to submit the levy on their production.

The levy is ¾ of 1% of sale value (\$0.75 per \$100.00). This is a refundable check-off, so producers who feel there is no value in producer directed research can contact the SFSDC office to request a refund application.

The commission will have a board of directors to oversee their activities. The anticipated annual producer dollar budget is \$40 – \$60,000, so the Executive Director and Levy Administration duties are done on a part-time basis. The Board consists of six producer directors, a member of the seed trade, an Ag Canada or University representative, a provincial government representative, and the Executive Director.

For more information, please contact the Project Consultant, Gord Pearse at 306-873-3450.

2004 Market Outlook & Hay Prices

(to June 30, 2004)

Phil Curry, Saskatchewan Forage Council, Melfort

Hay prices have remained steady and fairly strong throughout the spring at the \$70/ton mark. There is very little movement of hay, however, and producers are using up whatever hay stocks they have on farm or can access locally. The poor spring pasture conditions and large numbers of cattle kept through the winter resulted in an extended spring feeding season for most producers. There has been no pricing of the new hay crop yet as producers are unsure at what levels to price their hay at. The widespread rains in June, however, have brightened the prospects for at least an average 2004 hay crop.

There were no hay sales at the June 30, 2004 hay auction at *Vold, Jones & Vold Auction Co. Ltd.* (Ponoka, AB).

Prices for hay from *Elcan Forage Inc.* (Broderick, SK) have not been set as the first cut production is just coming into the plant now. Prices will be set by mid-July.

The final 2003 price to growers for alfalfa hay has been set by Tisdale Alfalfa Dehydrators at \$27.50/tonne. Baled alfalfa in the field is being priced at \$50-\$55/tonne.

Montana Hay Report

(Friday, July 2, 2004)

Justin Lumpkin, USDA Market News Service, Billings, MT.

There has been no pricing for the 2004 hay crop yet, but there have been limited sales of old crop alfalfa at \$65 - \$80/ton. New crop premium small square bales for horse interests are selling at \$90/ton. Good grass/alfalfa mixes in small square bales for horses are at \$75/ton.

Alfalfa: Lge. Rnd./Sq. - Good \$65-80 (U.S.\$)

Small Sq. - Supreme \$90

Alfalfa/grass – Sm. Sq. – good \$75

Grass: No reported sales

Timothy: Sm. Sq. - Premium 135

Alfalfa Relative Feed Value (RFV):

Supreme over 185; premium 170-185;

good 150 -170; fair 130-150; low < 130.

Grass Hay Crude Protein Scale: Premium over 13; good 9-13; fair 5-9; low < 5.

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The Saskatchewan Hay Report is published by the Saskatchewan Forage Council and is available online at www.saskforage.ca. 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 editors:

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