

# The Saskatchewan Hay Report

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## *In This Issue.....*

- **Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food Crop Report**
- **SW Seed Canada Ltd.**
- **Round Bale Silage**
- **Successful Hay Marketing**
- **Fall Management of Forage Stands**
- **Saskatchewan Hay Market Report**
- **Western Alfalfa Milling Report**
- **Wyoming Hay Report**
- **Montana Hay Report**



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## **Editors' Note**

Yields and market trend information is slowly becoming available as the haying season comes to an end. In this issue of the *Saskatchewan Hay Report* we will begin to present some of the 2005 numbers however, stay tuned for our Fall Issue which will provide a comprehensive summary. As well, we are working on compiling historical price and hay market information with data from the past six years. Watch for this information to be distributed and posted on the Forage Council website in early September.

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## **Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food Crop Report #21 (For the week ending August 21, 2005)**

Last week's rain improved topsoil moisture conditions on crop land with 58 percent of the reporters giving an adequate rating, compared with 29 per cent last week. Hay and pasture land are rated as adequate by 46 per cent of reporters, up from 25 per cent last week.

Yields of brome/alfalfa hay on dryland are estimated at 1.7 tons per acre, well above the 10-year average of 1.0 ton per acre. Yields are estimated to be the highest in the northeast and the lowest in the southwest region.

An average yield of 1.3 tons per acre was reported from brome/alfalfa hay in the south western region of the province.

An average yield of 1.8 tons per acre was reported from brome/alfalfa hay across the east central and west central regions of the province.

An average yield of 1.9 tons to 2.0 tons per acre was reported for brome/alfalfa hay across the north western and north eastern regions of the province.

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**SW Seed Canada Ltd.***Gord Pearse**Wholesale Division Manager**SW Seed Canada Ltd.*

SW Seed Canada Ltd. is one of Canada's major forage seed companies specializing in wholesale and retail seed sales, proprietary forage varieties, and forage seed contract production. Most producers will recognize us from our previous name, Newfield Seeds. Our latest emphasis has been to continue to develop our retail dealership network in western Canada, as well as provide a comprehensive range of seed varieties, including canola seed, which is a core strength of the parent company, Svalöf Weibull, of Sweden.

SW Seed Canada Ltd. has more than 150 dealers in western Canada, and we offer a comprehensive list of forage species and adapted varieties, including fifteen varieties that are available exclusively through us. Our newer additions include a new hybrid brome variety "AC Success" that combines the best attributes of smooth and meadow brome into the same species, and also some smaller market species, such as Frida alsike clover and Sigmund meadow fescue. We currently market the top two alfalfa varieties under Western Canadian irrigation management – AC Longview and Approved. (Source – Canada–Saskatchewan Irrigation Diversification Centre, Outlook, SK)

Pedigreed seed contracting has been a vital part of the business for the company and western Canadian producers for a couple of decades. We will continue to grow seed under contract to meet the needs of our wholesale and retail departments, but also look to expand our opportunities to produce for other seed companies throughout the world. We also purchase a great deal of forage seed off-contract, to supply our various markets throughout the world. This would include Saskatchewan's major forage seed crops such as alfalfa, clovers, timothy, and the dryland grasses.

The general market for forage seed tends to be a bit soft for many reasons including:

- over-production of some crops globally, while Saskatchewan yields and quality for most crops were very poor in 2004;
- unfavourable currency exchanges, primarily against the US dollar affect export reliant companies like ourselves;
- increased freight rates have increased at least 20 %, which has affected us and producers;
- current difficulties in Canadian agriculture, both in a lack of profitable crop options and the obvious challenges of the livestock industry;
- global politics, such as production subsidies and land set aside programs.

SW Seed Canada Ltd. has had a number of changes with our staff and focus, but be assured that we will continue to battle through these tough times with our seed and livestock producers. Good luck with the rest of your harvest.

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## **Round Bale Silage**

*Allan Foster*

*Forage Development Specialist*

*Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food*

Round bale silage or haylage as some people call it is forage that is baled at between 40 and 60% moisture and sealed in plastic tubes, covers or wrapped bales. The moisture and lack of oxygen promotes fermentation which preserves forage quality.

The advantages of baled silage over hay is improved palatability, less harvest losses, and reduced bloat and digestive problems that occur with alfalfa hay. The main disadvantage is increased costs for wrapping and plastic.

Round bale silage has become more popular in recent years. Producers have seen the advantage of round bale silage systems in years with wet summers when putting up dry hay has been difficult. Round bale silage has also worked well for salvaging frozen or late crops in the fall for livestock feed. However, round bale silage should not be thought of only as a way to salvage feed. It should be considered a complete forage system that requires planning and timely actions.

There are a number of things that must all come together to make good round bale silage. The points below are the some of the main management considerations.

- Harvest the crop at the proper stage. Silaging does not improve the crop quality, it maintains it. Keep the bales sealed for 4 weeks before feeding.
- Optimum moisture at baling is 45-55%. Baling at less than 40% will result in more air in the bale and mould. Baling at over 65% moisture will result in heavy bales and inadequate fermentation.
- Ensure bales are dense and well sealed. This means slowing down and making a tight bale. Limit the diameter of bales to 48 inches.
- Bale only an amount that can be covered or wrapped within a few hours.
- Use high quality plastic to wrap the bales.
- Locate bale stacks, if possible, in sheltered areas to reduce wind damage to plastic.
- Check bales often and patch any holes immediately. Air entering tubes, stacks or individually wrapped bales will result in spoilage.
- Store bales on a well-drained site, free of tall grass.

If you are interested in round bale silage the following publications will provide more detail on the process and are available on the Alberta and Manitoba Department of Agriculture websites or at [www.Foragebeef.ca](http://www.Foragebeef.ca).

Baled Silage, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

Baled Silage Production, Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives

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## **Successful Hay Marketing**

*Michel Tremblay*

*Forage Specialist*

*Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food*

Saskatchewan has a large area of tame forages covering approximately 2.7 M ha (6.5 million acres). Three and a half million of those acres are harvested for hay. Much of the hay is used on-farm to feed beef and dairy cattle, horses, and specialized livestock. Some of this hay production is sold off-farm to cow-calf producers, backgrounders, feedlots and forage processing plants.

Large square bales are efficient to transport and are becoming more common in Saskatchewan. Hay acres continue to expand in Saskatchewan, and selling hay off-farm is becoming more common. With an increasing number of hay sellers in the province, producers must develop markets in Saskatchewan and further afield, as well as marketing skills to allow them to capture and keep market opportunities.

Hay is a relatively bulky, low value commodity. Maximum value must be obtained from the hay to offset the high cost of moving the product to the end user. Maximum value is obtained by producing as high a quality product as economically possible, and obtaining the maximum possible price for the product.

The hay market is variable, with end use and associated quality requirements being the main defining elements of each market. Markets can be either domestic or overseas. Most overseas markets for long hay are accessed through cooperation with a processing or marketing company.

In order to successfully market and maximize profits when selling hay, a number of critical success factors must be addressed. These factors include transportation, quality, customer needs and markets.

*For more information:* [www.agr.gov.sk.ca/Crops/Forage\\_Pasture](http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/Crops/Forage_Pasture)



## **Fall Management of Forage Stands**

*Andre Bonneau*

*Forage Conversion Specialist*

*Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food*

*David Larsen*

*Soil/Nutrient Management Specialist*

*Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food*

### ***Fertility***

If moisture conditions are adequate, fall can be an effective time to fertilize forages. Since root development continues in the fall, nutrient uptake will occur until the soil freezes. The nutrient requirements can be determined from soil test results.

Phosphorus, potassium and sulphur can be applied on established stands not subject to water runoff. Nitrogen can be applied in the fall prior to freeze up. Volatilization losses are minimized if the nitrogen is applied before a rain or wet snow or after the soil temperature cools.

Denitrification losses can occur in the spring on waterlogged soils. Management benefits from fall application of nitrogen can offset some of the value of the nitrogen lost. If fall moisture conditions are not adequate, consider an early spring application of nutrients based on a soil test.

### ***Energy Storage***

Whenever alfalfa or grass is cut for forage, regrowth relies on energy reserves in the crown and roots. As leaves and stems develop, more energy is provided by photosynthesis while less energy is taken from root reserves. Eventually, root reserves become depleted and the forage will begin storing carbohydrates. The cycle is generally complete in 35 to 40 days, depending on climate, forage species and growing conditions.

Agronomists usually recommend six weeks of good growing conditions between harvesting dates. Furthermore, the last cut should be six weeks before the first killing frost. In many parts of Saskatchewan, the final harvest should be before the tenth to twentieth of August. Keeping this date in mind will help ensure a healthy crown for the winter and adequate energy reserves for regrowth in the spring.

### ***Dormant Season Seeding***

Occasionally, some forage producers wish to take advantage of early spring moisture by seeding their forage crop late in the fall. As “Dormant Season Seeding” suggests, the seed is placed into cool soil in the fall, and germinates in the warmer and wetter conditions in the spring. Many grasses perform very well under these conditions provided weed control is effective and fertility and flooding are not an issue. However, alfalfa seed does not fare as well as grasses. The seeding rate of alfalfa should be increased by 30% to 40% to compensate.

### ***Fall Grazing Stockpiled Forage***

Stockpiled forage is forage set aside during the summer for use during the late fall or dormant season. Usually, pasture or hay is harvested early and allowed to grow throughout the remainder of the season. Animals then graze the regrowth once the forage has become dormant.

The quality of the forage in the late fall or early winter depends mainly on the stage of maturity when it went dormant. Research in Ontario has shown an early graze or haying operation provides the forage more time to gain yield. However as maturity progresses, quality tends to decrease.

*For more information, contact the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1- 866- 457-2377.*

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## Saskatchewan Hay Market Report

*Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food*

[www.agr.gov.sk.ca/feedforage](http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/feedforage)

### Baled Forage Prices to August 18, 2005

	Listings	Listings Priced	Tons Listed	Tons Priced	Lowest Price/ton	Highest Price/ton	Weighted Average Price/ton
<b>Alfalfa</b>	55	45	18,493	14,068	\$0	\$108	\$58
<b>Brome</b>	4	4	531	531	\$49	\$86	\$53
<b>Brome/Alfalfa</b>	61	54	14,840	13,105	\$27	\$100	\$53
<b>Clover</b>	1	1	119	119	\$50	\$50	\$50
<b>Greenfeed</b>	2	2	169	169	\$22	\$38	\$31
<b>Other</b>	22	17	4,897	4,402	\$29	\$83	\$41
<b>Slough Hay</b>	3	0	91	0			
<b>Straw</b>	5	5	1,490	1,490	\$16	\$42	\$26
<b>Wild Hay</b>	1	0	83	0			

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### Western Alfalfa Milling Report

*Doug Will*

*General Manager*

*Western Alfalfa Milling Company Ltd. – Norquay, SK*

[www.westernalfalfa.ca](http://www.westernalfalfa.ca)

Western Alfalfa Milling Company Limited produces and distributes plant based (nitrogen) pellets worldwide. These pellets are used for a variety of purposes including feeding livestock directly or through a compound feed ration, land reclamation from oil well sites or other soil contamination and/or soil compaction and as a natural fertilizer program.

Research projects have shown very positive results from using alfalfa as a source of nutrients. WAMCO produces certified organic pellets so this may provide organic growers with a source of plant nutrients.

Mr. Doug Will, General Manager of WAMCO, indicated that yields on the 2500 acres that they harvest would approach the long-term average of 1.75 tons per acre. On these harvested acres only 50% will have a second cut due to the dry period of late July /early August. The quality of the alfalfa is very high with some of the certified organic alfalfa hay reaching over 25% protein. First cut alfalfa hay bales are averaging over 20% protein.

The Asian market is still strong, however in the last 4 to 5 months interest has picked up in the Eastern United States due to the prolonged dry period in that area. Product is also being moved into the non-feed market including soil nutrients, land reclamation and lawn and garden.

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**Wyoming Hay Report**

August 19, 2005 - USDA Market News Service

Dennis Widga

Torrington, Wyoming

[www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/to\\_gr310.txt](http://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/to_gr310.txt)

Trade continues slow with prices steady to weak. Demand very light for cow hay. Demand is good for dairy quality hay, however supplies are limited in western Nebraska and eastern Wyoming. Producers having difficult time getting hay baled due to rain showers. All prices dollars per ton FOB stack in medium to large square bales and rounds, unless otherwise noted. Horse hay in small squares.

**Eastern Wyoming**

Alfalfa - Supreme 90.00-95.00; Premium 75.00-85.00; Good 60.00-70.00; Fair 50.00-55.00, 75.00 delivered; ground and delivered 76.00. Alfalfa/Orchard for horses 125.00. Timothy 125.00. Dehydrated Alfalfa Pellets (17 percent protein) 125.00 wholesale.

**Central and Western Wyoming**

Alfalfa - Supreme 100.00-110.00; Premium 70.00-85.00; Good 60.00-70.00. Alfalfa/Grass 65.00-85.00. Alfalfa Cubes 90.00-95.00.

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**Weekly Montana Hay Report**

August 19, 2005 - USDA Market News Service

Justin Lumpkin, OIC

Billings, Montana

[www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/BL\\_gr310.txt](http://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/BL_gr310.txt)

Trade remains slow compared to last week. Showers continue in many places slowing progress on baling of second cutting. Third cutting looks to be reduced as second cutting has been delayed. Inquiry remains fairly light. All sales FOB the stack and per ton basis in large rounds or large square bales, unless otherwise stated.

**Alfalfa:** Good new crop alfalfa in small squares 75.00-85.00; Fair to Good large rounds and squares 60.00, little 65.00; Utility large squares and rounds 45.00-55.00.

**Alfalfa/grass mix:** Premium small squares 100.00; Good small squares 85.00-90.00, large squares and rounds 60.00-75.00; Fair 55.00-60.00.

**Grass:** Premium small squares 90.00-95.00. Good large squares 75.00, small squares 85.00.

**Timothy:** Premium 2 twine and 3 twine small square bales 120.00-140.00. Premium Timothy-mixed grass hay 122.00.

**Straw:** No reported sales.

Alfalfa hay test guidelines, used with visual appearance and intent of sale. Quantitative factors are approximate and many factors can affect feeding value.

**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](http://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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