

The Saskatchewan Hay Report

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Editors' Note

This final edition of the *Saskatchewan Hay Report* for the 2007 season provides a summary of the year's production and markets, from across western Canada. A note of thanks to our extensive list of contributors who have added to the success of the *Report* over the past growing season and to our readers, for your continued support of this industry publication. We look forward to next year! Cheers ~ Art Westlund & Janice Bruynooghe

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food Crop Report 27 & 28 (For the weeks ending October 9 & October 15, 2007)

South Eastern Saskatchewan: Topsoil moisture conditions have improved from two weeks ago, when only 15% of the hay and pasture land was rated as having adequate topsoil moisture; this week that percentage has risen to 60%. Farmers are busy hauling bales, moving livestock, fixing fences, cleaning corrals and applying fertilizers. Cattle owners are moving cattle to different feeding areas and marketing calves.

South Western Saskatchewan: Topsoil moisture conditions have improved from only 7% of the hay and pasture land rated as having adequate topsoil moisture to 26%. Farmers are busy hauling bales. Livestock water supplies are short in the Bengough and Mankota areas. Cattle are coming home from community and summer pastures.



East Central Saskatchewan: Topsoil moisture conditions improved slightly during the past week. Eighty-two percent of the hay and pasture land were rated as having adequate topsoil moisture. Cattle are coming home from pastures and some are being moved onto stubble fields. Farmers are hauling bales, cleaning corrals and starting to fertilize.

West Central Saskatchewan: Fifty-two percent of the hay and pasture land was rated as having adequate topsoil moisture compared with fifty-five percent last week. Farmers are spraying, hauling bales, applying fertilizer, fixing fences and working low lying areas. Cattle are being brought in from the fields.

North Eastern Saskatchewan: Conditions have dried on hay and pasture land, with ninety-three percent of land rated as having adequate topsoil moisture, compared to ninety-nine percent last week. Farmers are baling straw, hauling bales and applying fertilizer.

North Western Saskatchewan: Topsoil moisture remained similar to last week, with eighty-seven percent of the hay and pasture land rated as having adequate topsoil moisture. Cattle are coming home from pasture and calves are starting to go to market. Farmers are hauling bales, baling straw, fixing fence and applying fertilizer.

Haying Season: A Producer's View

Don Allan

AllanHay, Sylvan Lake, AB

At the time of this writing, October 20, we have finally finished baling hay and combining (just last night, in fact). Hay baling started in April taking off last year's second cut hay that overwintered in the windrows. It then recommenced the beginning of July and continued right through until October 16.

2007 Crop: Yields were exceptionally good where adequate fertilizer had been applied just before the spring rains. Four tons per acre for first cut and two tons per acre for second cut were not uncommon. Our total rainfall in west central Alberta was thirty inches or more for many of the hay growers. Needless to say that posed major problems getting the hay off dry.

Bad Weather Management Tools: We made good use of four things to help get our hay off in decent shape. In terms of equipment and field operations, following most showers we either tedded the windrows with a tedder or inverted and fluffed them with the use of a rotary rake. Physically, we found that keeping as much hay up off the ground as possible during the curing process led to a bit more bleaching but a lot less bacterial activity. Mold growth and bad odour was kept to a minimum. Our equine clientele are usually prepared to sacrifice some colour for a cleaner, fresher smelling product. The third management tool is the use of hay preservative while baling. It saved the day for us many times through the course of the months of baling. We now are looking at it like we look at our grain dryer. Make use of it as soon as it is economical to do so. Basically, that means that as soon as hay gets down to 21% moisture we start baling. At the level of 4 pounds of preservative per ton of hay, it doesn't cost any more than what we save in leaf loss and weight gain. The fourth new piece of equipment that helps keep the bales looking

green is the Haukaas Quick Pick 10 Bale Mover. As soon as possible after baling the bales are bunched into groups of 10 for later retrieval. In a good crop we can bunch about 120 bales per hour. The resulting green sides to the bales really pleases the fussier buyer and also allows the hay to show better at the weekly auction on our semi as they are loaded butt ends out.

Hay Market: Our local market has yet to stabilize. Now that harvesting is complete we will be starting to move hay next week. Thus far our perennial customers are paying a fair price for their yearly needs. Currently most of our hay is trading for \$55 - \$65 per round bale delivered within a 100 km radius of our Sylvan Lake farm. Some have started their winter feeding programs so we have been hauling a couple of 34 bale loads per week. Since a lot of the truckers in Alberta have been engaged in the oil patch those of us with our own delivery capabilities seem to have little problem selling and moving our hay. For those relying on hiring their hauling done it seems to be getting to be more of a challenge. We are getting an average of two calls or emails per day for hay from outside of Canada. Our export agent is staying very busy and is moving a good volume of hay in various rectangular bale formats. We have gone strictly to round bales in our own production. That way I can pretty well put up and market hay from our land base with very little hired help.

Northeast Saskatchewan Hay Conditions

Al Foster, PAg

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Saskatchewan Food and Agriculture

The summer of 2007 was reasonably good to hay producers in northeast Saskatchewan. A spring frost set back growth over much of the region but good rainfall in May and June and warm weather resulted in an above average hay crop. The crop generally came off in good condition with only a few scattered showers in July. Regrowth on alfalfa fields was good and a number of producers took second cuts. Rain in September made it more difficult to get the second cut off.

Pasture conditions across the northeast were good. Water is not a problem on pasture anywhere in the area. There is ample straw throughout the region and even though harvest was slow many producers used the non harvest days to bale straw.

Most livestock producers will have adequate hay supplies so local demand is low. Going into fall hay prices are below the \$50-60 per ton long term average for the area.

Southeast Saskatchewan Hay Conditions

Lorne Klein, PAg

Forage Development Specialist – Weyburn, SK

Saskatchewan Food and Agriculture

Hay yields – visual estimate average to good with hay for sale in the southeast. Expect prices to be in the \$40-50/ton for baled alfalfa/grass. However, there remains some uncertainty now with

the recent announcement of higher grain prices. Expect more hay to be fed rather than grain. Do not see trucks moving hay out of area yet.

Water supplies – majority of dugouts have water with no reported activity of anyone hauling or pumping water.

Pasture conditions – majority are grazed off. Very little moisture received since the end of June. Normal amount of straw baling.

Southwest Saskatchewan Hay Conditions

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Saskatchewan Food and Agriculture

Hay yields across the southwest were very variable this year, but overall yields were slightly lower than the average for the region. With little to no precipitation occurring in the July to August time period, pastures really suffered due to the hot, dry weather. Gophers were a severe problem in much of the southwest region, resulting in significant forage losses to many producers.

The southwest really needs some fall rains to recharge the soil moisture and possibly fill some water sources. A few producers in the very dry regions are experiencing a shortage of water for their livestock

In spite of the dry summer weather, hay prices appear similar to last year. Good hay appears to be moving in the \$65-70/ton range. For producers having to truck hay any significant distance, freight costs add up very quickly when paying \$4.50 to \$5.00/loaded mile to hire a semi.

Overview of Saskatchewan Hay Production in 2007

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Saskatchewan Food and Agriculture

Many areas of Saskatchewan had above average snow cover in the winter of 2006-2007 and that, coupled with soil moisture from rain in the fall 2006 once again created the potential for a good forage crop this year. Drier conditions in west central and south west regions, however, were creating concern for the potential of the 2007 crop early in the year. Generally good snow cover across much of the province resulted in minimal winterkill in alfalfa, although low areas in some fields in the northeast were killed due to flooding. Late frost in central and northern regions had a negative impact on forage grasses and legumes, slowing development and, in some cases, having a negative impact on first cut yields. Most regions achieved yields above the five year average, but generally lower than those achieved in 2006. West central and southwest yields were below average due to dry conditions in fall 2006 and spring 2007. Rain in June helped pastures recover in these areas. Hot, dry weather in July reduced the rate of regrowth on many hay fields. Many

areas did not have sufficient regrowth to justify a second cut, although some early cut fields had one ton/acre regrowth. Quality in all areas has been good, due to hot dry weather during harvest.



Photo credit: M. Tremblay, SAF

Due to high yields in the past few years, hay prices have been below normal. Hay supplies in some areas have declined, resulting in some hay movement this summer. Prices have increased somewhat from \$45/ton to the \$50-60/ton range.

Many areas of Saskatchewan received generous to excessive amounts of rainfall late in the season. This moisture will give the 2008 forage crop a good start. Softening cattle prices and potentially a good start on the 2008 crop may keep prices trending at average or below

levels. However, if relatively high grain and oilseed prices persist, some changes in land use may occur, potentially resulting in reduced forage supply.

Alberta Hay Report

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Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

The 2007 forage season started with generally good growing conditions across most of Alberta. There were exceptions with areas of northeastern Alberta having poor spring forage growth as result of both dry soil conditions and frost damage.

In southern Alberta first cut hay yields were above the 2006 average on both dryland and irrigation. Forage quality was rated as high, with 86% of the hay being considered in either good to excellent condition. High temperatures and limited summer rainfall resulted in a poor second cut on dryland forage stands. Although forage yields were low, quality remained in the fair to good category. For irrigation, the dry growing conditions provided the opportunity for hay growers to harvest a good second cut with 70% of the hay being rated as having good to excellent quality.

In central Alberta first cut hay yields were above average. The largest increases were in western areas with yields 30% higher than 2006. In eastern areas first cut yields were 15% higher than 2006. Forage quality was rated high with 80% of the forage being considered in either good or excellent condition. Second cut hay yields were average in western areas and below average for eastern Alberta. Second cut forage quality was only rated as fair to excellent. Frequent precipitation in many areas led to significant delays in harvesting and the subsequent deterioration in forage quality.

The Peace River region generally had above average hay yields on the first cut. Forage quality was rated as high with 70% of the hay being rated in good or excellent condition. Second cut

production was near the long-term average but quality did vary from poor to excellent. Wet weather during August resulted in delays to harvest and crop deterioration.

Fall estimates would suggest that for dryland pasture areas in southern Alberta, 49% are in poor condition, 26% fair and 23% in good condition. In central Alberta, pastures in the western areas are rated as being 15% poor condition, 30% fair and 46% in good condition. In eastern areas, pastures are rated as 22% in poor condition, 55% fair and 22% in good condition. In the Peace River, pastures are rated as 8% in poor condition, 45% fair and 43% good in condition.

With most regions reporting above average yields, demand for hay will likely be limited. Current prices would suggest that perennial forage hay will be trading in the \$40 to \$60/tonne range.

Manitoba Hay Report

Glenn Friesen, PAg

Business Development Specialist - Forage

Manitoba Agriculture, Food & Rural Initiatives - Crops Branch

The delay in a killing frost has left some tame hay stands still waiting to be harvested. Yields overall were much better than 2006 and are reported as 113% above average, with the eastern region producing the provincial high of an additional 50% above normal, and the southwestern region producing the provincial low of 13% below normal. Average yields: alfalfa yield: 3.5 t/ac (118% of norm), alfalfa/grass: 2.8 t/ac (122% of norm), native hay: 0.9 t/ac (53% of norm).

Overall quality of first and second cut is average to below average, due to a combination of reasons, including untimely rains, heat stress, and excessive handling. Third cut harvests in the central and eastern regions have proven more successful and are reported to have higher quality.

Alfalfa weevil was a concern in many alfalfa hay and seed fields in the eastern, Interlake, central and southwest regions of the province. Some insecticides were applied as control measures. There was some concern that Cygon (dimethoate) was not killing alfalfa weevil larvae, even when a pH adjustor had been used. Some have suggested they felt 20-25 larvae / sweep was too high an economic threshold for alfalfa weevil in alfalfa seed fields.

Greenfeed barley and oat crops yielded average to above average, ranging from 1.5 t/ac in drier areas to 3.5 t/ac in the higher moisture regions. Corn silage yields were above average being reported at 12-20 t/ac (35% DM). There will be sufficient feed for the 2007/08 feeding period.

Pasture

Pastures are in poor to fair condition. Most affected was the eastern region reporting pasture yields at 50-60% of normal. This was due to both excessive moisture in the early season and insufficient in the later part of the season. Supplemental feeding continues on pastures. Fall rains have helped replenish much needed soil moisture reserves however more will be needed to maintain good spring vigor. Many producers are aware that early grazing next spring will severely affect pasture longevity.

Watering Cattle with Snow

R.G. (Bob) Klemmer, MAgr, PAg

Beef-Forage Specialist

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food

There are many reasons why cattle producers could consider allowing their cows to graze snow in winter for their water requirements. Lengthening the grazing season, without the need for extensive water system enhancements, is just one of the many compelling reasons. Any time you can get your cows to feed themselves (winter range, swath grazing, crop aftermath, etc.), it reduces winter feeding costs and improves your bottom line. Whatever your reason, it is important to go into it with your eyes wide open, and armed with knowledge.



If snow is abundant and not icy, crusted over or packed into hard drifts, dry, pregnant cows can consume adequate amounts of snow to satisfy their water needs. Watering with snow is not recommended for lactating cows, or cows in poor condition

It is important that you know the body condition score (level of fat reserves) of your cows. It is best to start out the winter with a body condition score above three on a scale of one to five. If some of your cows are under condition, they should be separated from the main herd, given water and fed to gain body condition.

To be successful, wind-break shelter and a healthy diet with adequate energy, protein, minerals and vitamins is essential. The heat produced by the normal digestive process is adequate to melt the snow and warm it to body temperature.

Studies done at the University of Alberta and their Kinsella Ranch, show that some cows may make the adjustment to snow without outward signs of discomfort, while others may protest. Keep a close eye on your cows; they will tell you when things aren't just right for them. There may be good reason for them feeling discomfort. Perhaps snow conditions have changed and there isn't enough snow, or the snow that is available is not in good condition (i.e. icy, crusted over or wind-blown into hard drifts). There may be many reasons (poor health, nutritional deficiency, body condition, etc.) why some cows do not adjust well. Whatever the cow's reason for protest, it should be investigated to make sure there isn't a problem you are not aware of.

Grazing snow is not instinctive. It is a learned behaviour, and it takes three to four days for cattle to adapt to eating snow. Because of this, it is not a good idea to switch back and forth from snow to water. If you are considering adapting your cows to snow grazing, do so before the severe winter weather arrives.

If you have been watering directly from your dugout prior to starting them on snow, some cows will continue to go to the dugout. Closing off access to the dugout will prevent accidental drowning, if cattle break through the ice.

In the current economy, becoming a low-cost producer is important to prospering in the beef industry. Getting your cows to graze and feed themselves for more months of the year means spending less money feeding your cows... and cleaning corrals. In the right situation, watering with snow may be a strategy that works for you. If you chose to use this approach, you need to ensure that the well being of your animals is kept front and centre in your decision making. At the first sign of undue stress, steps need to be taken to make alternate arrangements. Going into this well-informed and ever-watchful will help ensure it is a good experience for both you and your cows.

Saskatchewan Hay Market Report

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food

www.agr.gov.sk.ca/feedforage

Baled Forage Prices (dollars per ton) to October 17, 2007

	Listings	Listings Priced	Tons Listed	Tons Priced	Lowest Price/ton	Highest Price/ton	Weighted Average Price/ton
Alfalfa	18	14	9,030	7,310	\$33	\$80	\$46
Brome/Alfalfa	20	16	5,007	4,137	\$18	1\$00	\$52
Clover	2	2	819	819	\$37	\$40	\$38
Green feed	1	1	450	450	\$40	\$40	\$40
Straw	4	2	174	114	\$30	\$42	\$32

USDA Market News Service Hay Reports

October 12, 2007 - USDA Market News Service

Dennis Widga and Justin Lumpkin

www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/to_gr310.txt

Wyoming, Western Nebraska, and Western South Dakota Weekly Hay Summary

Trade and movement slow to moderate. There have been some inquires coming from the Southeastern states as some of these areas have experienced drought conditions. Demand moderate to good. Comments have been made that some buyers already have needs filled so as not to have a repeat of last year's situation where hay was in short supply.

Weekly Montana Hay Report

Sales remain steady and demand continues moderate to good.

All prices in U.S. dollars per ton FOB stack in medium to large square bales and rounds unless other wise noted.

	Eastern Wyoming	Central & Western Wyoming	Western South Dakota	Montana
Alfalfa				
Supreme	\$140.00	\$120.00-\$130.00		\$108.00
Premium	\$120.00-\$135.00	\$110.00-\$125.00	\$90.00-\$110.00	
Good to Premium				\$90.00
Good	\$120.00-\$124.00	\$100.00-\$124.00		
Fair -Good	\$95.00-\$110.00	\$60.00-\$85.00	\$60.00-\$75.00	
Mixed Grass		\$110.00-\$120.00	\$80.00	\$65.00
Timothy- Premium	\$210.00			\$150.00
Alfalfa/Grass	\$165.00	\$100.00-\$110.00	\$80.00-\$100.00	

Hay Quality Designations - Physical Descriptions:

Supreme: Very early maturity, pre bloom, soft fine stemmed, extra leafy - factors indicative of very high nutritive content. Hay is excellent colour and free of damage. Relative Feed Value (RFV): >185

Premium: Early maturity, i.e., pre-bloom in legumes and pre head in grass hays; extra leafy and fine stemmed - factors indicative of a high nutritive content. Hay is green and free of damage. RFV: 170-185

Good: Early to average maturity, i.e., early to mid-bloom in legumes and early head in grass hays; leafy, fine to medium stemmed, free of damage other than slight discoloration. RFV: 150-170

Fair: Late maturity, i.e., mid to late-bloom in legumes and headed in grass hays; moderate or below leaf content, and generally coarse stemmed. Hay may show light damage. RFV: 130-150

Utility: Hay in very late maturity, such as mature seed pods in legumes or mature head in grass hays, coarse stemmed. This category could include hay discounted due to excessive damage and heavy weed content or mold. RFV: <130

*Source: USDA NE Dept of Ag Market News, Kearney, NE (308) 237-7579
Keith L Williams - Market Reporter www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/sc_gr310.txt*

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