

# The Saskatchewan Hay and Pasture Report

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## Editors' Note

Welcome to the Saskatchewan Forage Council's *Saskatchewan Hay and Pasture Report*. You may have noticed we changed the name in effort to better reflect the broad base of forage related information provided by this report. As usual, we are pleased to bring you timely updates and production information for another growing season. In this first issue of 2008 we present articles on the 2008 forage supply and market outlook, the benefits of forages in irrigated cropping systems, information on hay and pasture listing services, water supply expansion program details and information on common forage pests. Read on to learn about the current market situation for the Saskatchewan Forage Industry.

We welcome your feedback and encourage anyone interested in being placed on our email distribution list to contact the SFC at [office@saskforage.ca](mailto:office@saskforage.ca). You may also want to visit our website [www.saskforage.ca](http://www.saskforage.ca) for regular news and information related to the forage industry.

Leanne Thompson  
*Saskatchewan Hay and Pasture Report Editor*

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**Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture**  
**Number 7 (week ending May 18, 2008) and Number 8 (week ending May 25, 2008)**

### South Eastern Saskatchewan:

#### **Number 7**

Topsoil moisture conditions continued to decline as 9% of hay and pasture land was rated as adequate, compared to 13% last week. Rain is critical for hay and pasture in this area. Cattle are still being fed in some areas and hay crops are short. The water shortage is becoming critical for some farmers and ranchers in the Pangman area. Cattle producers are running out of hay in the Broadview area, as feeding continues due to slow pasture growth. Cattle also continue to be fed in the Grenfell, Fillmore, and Montmartre areas.

**Number 8**

On hay and pasture land, reporters rate 21% as having adequate topsoil moisture conditions, up from 9% last week. Pasture conditions have deteriorated in the southeast since late April. 34% of the pastures are rated as being in fair to excellent condition, compared to 48% at the end of April. Many livestock owners continue to feed hay and supplies are running out. Some are looking at changing planting intentions to greenfeed due to the poor pastures and hay crop potential. 71% of the area has adequate water supplies for livestock - down slightly from 75% in late April. In the Gainsborough area, dugouts are low and could soon run dry. Gophers were also damaging crops and hay.

**South Western Saskatchewan:****Number 7**

Topsoil moisture conditions on hay and pastureland were rated as adequate on 15% of the land, compared to 27% last week. Rain is needed soon. Pasture growth has been slow and now early growth is turning brown. Farmers are still feeding cows in the Bengough and Hazenmore areas. Water is being hauled for livestock in the Hazenmore, Ponteix, and Stewart Valley areas. Some areas are not sure if they will harvest a hay crop because of the lack of moisture. Gophers continue to be a problem in the South West where they are damaging hay crops in the Maple Creek area.

**Number 8**

Reporters rate 22% of hay and pasture land as having adequate topsoil moisture conditions, up from 15% last week. Pasture conditions have improved since late April. 55% of the pastures are rated as being in fair to excellent condition, compared to 35% at the end of April. Hay crops are expected to be short. 53% of the area has adequate water supplies for livestock - up slightly from 49% in late April. Gophers continue to be out in large numbers and are causing crop and hay damage.

**East Central Saskatchewan:****Number 7**

Reporters rated 37% of hay and pasture land as having adequate moisture, compared to 50% last week. Livestock producers are still feeding cattle in the Stockholm, Quill Lake, Imperial and Meacham areas.

**Number 8**

For hay and pasture land, reporters rate 42% as having adequate topsoil moisture conditions, up from 37% last week. Pasture conditions have improved since the end of April when 39% of reporters rated conditions as fair to good. At the end of May, 45% of reporters rate conditions as fair to good. Feed stocks are running low because farmers still need to feed their cattle hay in many areas. Ninety-two per cent of the area has adequate water supplies for livestock - on par with the end of April.

**West Central Saskatchewan:****Number 7**

Topsoil moisture conditions were rated as adequate on 66% of hay and pasture land, compared to 91% last week. Pastures are poor and late, though have started to green up this past week.

**Number 8**

For pasture and hay land, reporters rated 43% as having adequate topsoil moisture conditions, down from 66% last week. Pasture conditions have improved since the end of April when 32% were rated as good to excellent. At the end of May, 50% are rated as good to excellent. Rain

will be needed soon to revive slow-growing pastures. Ninety-six per cent of the area has adequate water supplies for livestock - compared with 90% at the end of April.

**North Eastern Saskatchewan:****Number 7**

Reporters rated topsoil moisture conditions on 55% of hay and pasture land as adequate, compared to 93% last week. Pastures are starting to green up.

**Number 8**

Reporters rate 66% of the hay and pasture land as having adequate topsoil moisture, up from 55% last week. Pastures have improved in the northeast since late April when 24% of them were rated as fair to good. At the end of May, 85% of reporters give the fair to good rating. However, many producers are still feeding hay to their stock as pasture growth is slow. Livestock water supplies are adequate for the area.

**North Western Saskatchewan:****Number 7**

Reporters rated topsoil moisture on 86% of hay and pasture land as adequate, compared to 98% last week. Pastures are slow to develop, and cattle are still being fed in the Debden, Big River, St. Walburg, Barthel, and Rapid View areas. Farmers are running out of hay.

**Number 8**

Topsoil moisture conditions deteriorated during the past week. Reporters rated 69% of hay and pasture land as having adequate topsoil moisture, down from 86% last week. Seventy-two per cent of north western pastures are in fair to good condition, similar to the end of April. Pastures need heat and rain. Cattle are being turned out to pastures as hay supplies run short. Livestock water supplies are adequate in most of the region.

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**Many Factors Will Influence Forage Supplies in 2008**

*Michel Tremblay, Provincial Forage Specialist  
Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture*

Saskatchewan has a large forage industry, with seeded grasslands and rangeland accounting for approximately 20 million acres in the province. Forage production from these acres is a key input into the province's sizeable cow-calf industry. As with anything, a look at supply and demand fundamentals will shed some light on where forage supply and price will go in 2008.

**'Supply is a function of area and yield'**

Forage acres in Saskatchewan have been climbing for several years with pasture acreage increasing from 3,476,648 acres in 2001 to 4,848,757 acres in 2006. Harvested hay acres increased from 3,050,000 acres to 4,300,000 acres during the same time period (Table 1). The increase in acres was due to an upward trend in livestock numbers, government programs that provided incentives to convert marginal land to perennial cover, and, perhaps most importantly, poor returns in cereal grain and oilseed production.

**Table 1. Saskatchewan hay acreage, production and prices, 2001-2006.**

Year	Seeded Acreage	Harvested Acreage	Yield	Price \$/ton
2006	5,346,657	4,300,000	1.4	42.00
2005	5,150,000	4,450,000	1.4	53.00
2004	4,800,000	4,375,000	1.2	72.00
2003	4,500,000	4,075,000	0.8	89.00
2002	4,275,000	3,300,000	0.7	124.00
2001	3,950,000	3,050,000	0.8	86.00

Source: Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

Forage yields over the same period increased, recovering from a multi year drought in the early part of the decade. Hay yields in the past four years were, on a provincial basis, above average (Table 2).

**Table 2. Saskatchewan hay yields (ton/ac) by region, 2001-2007**

Year	South	Central	North	Yearly Average	Long term average
2007	1.26	1.53	1.79	1.52	1.39
2006	1.15	1.70	1.70	1.51	1.39
2005	1.62	1.87	1.65	1.71	1.39
2004	1.77	1.72	1.91	1.80	1.39
2003	1.22	0.90	0.77	0.96	1.39
2002	1.31	0.79	0.59	0.89	1.39
2001	0.90	0.88	0.89	0.89	1.39

Source: Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

### **“Demand pace is set by beef cattle”**

Although there are numerous markets for the province’s forage, the provincial beef herd represents the largest user of Saskatchewan forage. During 2001 to 2007, beef markets have seen considerable flux, due to factors such as BSE and a resultant drop in prices of cattle due to export restrictions, and a more recent downturn in cattle prices partly caused by high feed prices reducing margins on feeding cattle. Reduced culling during the BSE crisis increased the size of the breeding herd, which peaked in 2005. Herd size has decreased since then, as herd culling accelerated, and downsizing occurred due to reduced profitability. Although total provincial numbers are down 200,000 head on July 1, 2007, compared to the same date in 2005, potential reduced forage demand may be offset by a move to rations containing a greater proportion of forages, in response to increased feed grain prices.

**Table 3. Beef cattle in Saskatchewan (July 1), 2001-2007.**

Year	Bulls	Cows	Heifers	Steers	Calves	Total
2007	70,000	1,480,000	295,000	175,000	1,366,000	3,386,000
2006	72,000	1,508,000	296,000	145,000	1,388,000	3,409,000
2005	75,000	1,545,000	367,000	165,000	1,430,000	3,582,000
2004	74,000	1,500,000	352,000	197,000	1,372,000	3,495,000
2003	70,000	1,335,000	345,000	150,000	1,271,000	3,171,000
2002	61,000	1,270,000	277,000	122,500	1,167,000	2,897,500
2001	63,000	1,240,000	280,000	125,000	1,148,500	2,856,500

Source: Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

**"Recent market pressures may pinch supply and put upward pressure on prices"**

With the rallying of most cereal, oilseed, and pulse crop prices since last fall, there will be strong incentive for forage acres to be removed to grow annual crops, particularly on better quality soils. Many producers found that their feed stacks were depleted more than expected during the long winter of 2007-2008, resulting in feed reserves lower than anticipated this spring. Traditionally, annual forages have been used as a flexible feed source when supplies of perennial forages become short. With high grain prices, the inclination to make greenfeed out of a potentially lucrative grain crop will be unlikely.

**"Precipitation timing and amount is crucial to forage yield"**

Forage growers have long known the importance of timing and amount of precipitation and its effect on forage production. White (1985) evaluated the yield of several dryland cool season grasses in 4 locations in the Northern Great Plains. He determined that over half of all yield variability observed in grass yields was due to April and May precipitation. Stitt (1958) determined that of the yields of seven grasses grown at Moccasin, Montana, 88% of yield variation was due to April and May precipitation. Early spring precipitation will largely determine forage yields. Soil moisture levels in the southwest half of the province are low, and many areas have received average to below average precipitation this spring, reducing forage production potential. Cold temperatures this spring have reduced evaporative moisture losses, but have also slowed grass development, which is well over 2 weeks behind in many areas.

Feed demand is not inelastic, and cattle numbers can decline, particularly in feeder cattle classes, but it appears that the short term demand for forage is relatively constant. Feed carryover from 2007 is down, crop development in 2008 is delayed, and moisture so far this spring has been limited, pointing to reduced forage production this year. Prices for forage, which have languished well below the long term average of \$62/ton for grass/alfalfa hay, have began to move up recently in response to factors pointing to a reduced supply in 2008.

**References:**

White, L. M., Stand age, precipitation, and temperature effects on forage yields. pp. 39-43, JRM, vol. 38(1), 1985.

Stitt, R. E. Factors affecting yield and quality of dryland grasses. pp.136- 138. Agron. J. vol. 50, 1958.

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**Hay and Pasture Listing Services**

Due to the cool spring conditions encountered through much of Saskatchewan, winter feeding has continued longer than normal, depleting hay supplies in many farmyard feed stacks across the province. Cool spring conditions have also made for slow pasture growth and coupled with the dry conditions throughout much of the south and central regions of Saskatchewan, have pushed pasture turnout dates further into spring than normal. Many producers are concerned about the feed and grazing capabilities for this 2008/2009 season. If dry conditions persist,

forage and hay yields will be reduced through much of the province both shortening the grazing season and reducing hay availability this fall.

There are several hay and pasture listings available through provincial and state governments as well as private industry on the internet. Here is a list of some sites that you may want to visit in the search for forage this year:

### **Saskatchewan Feed Grain and Forage Listing**

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

This listing is available with no cost to users and is maintained by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture. It provides a space for producers to submit or search for baled or standing forage as well as feed grains. This site also provides maps of available listings by product including baled forage, standing forage, other feed and custom service availability.

### **Alberta Agriculture Hay, Straw and Pasture Listing**

[www.agric.gov.ab.ca/app68/hay](http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/app68/hay)

The hay, straw and pasture listing is another no cost service and is maintained by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. Listings include baled and standing hay, straw and pasture (for sale, rent or lease).



*Photo credit: M. Tremblay, SMA*

### **Manitoba Agriculture Hay, Pasture and Boarding Listing Services**

The following three sites are all maintained by Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives

<http://web2.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/haysearch/>

Provides a listing of hay and straw for sale in Manitoba. Listings may be searched according to forage quality.

[www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/news/pasturelist/pasture\\_list.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/news/pasturelist/pasture_list.html)

Provides a list of pasture for rent in Manitoba.

[www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/news/pasturelist/boarding\\_list.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/news/pasturelist/boarding_list.html)

Provides a list of cattle boarding and calf share-cropping.

### **Montana Hay Hotline**

<http://agr.mt.gov/crops/hayFirst.asp>

This site provides a listing of available forage by county. Maintained by the Montana Department of Agriculture.

### **North Dakota State University (NDSU) FeedList**

[www.ag.ndsu.edu/feedlist/](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/feedlist/)

This site maintained by NDSU's Agriculture and University Extension Department, provides a no cost listing of available forages in North Dakota.

### **South Dakota FeedFinder**

<http://sdces.sdstate.edu:8080/FeedFinder>

This site provides a listing of a number of forage products including baled hay, standing forage, pasture and silage. This listing is maintained by the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Extension Department at the South Dakota State University.

### **Need Feed**

[www.needfeed.com](http://www.needfeed.com)

This is a non-profit web site maintained by volunteers who are dedicated to providing Horse Owners, Livestock and Feed Producers with an electronic site where all affected by this feed shortage can communicate Nation Wide and hopefully assist each other. Need Feed aims to provide information to farm communities across Canada where feed, pasture, boarding and transportation is required as well as where it is available.

### **A.J. BatHay Listing**

[www.aibat.com/bidform/add\\_listings/hay\\_add.cfm](http://www.aibat.com/bidform/add_listings/hay_add.cfm)

This site provides a subscription service to an on-line market where buyers and sellers can conduct business. There is a \$99.00(+tax)/year fee for this service which also provides daily updates on market changes.

All of the above listings are available on the Saskatchewan Forage Council website at [www.saskforage.ca](http://www.saskforage.ca). Just click on "links" and choose the Forage and Pasture Listing category. We work hard to keep our website up to date, so visit it often for the latest information related to forages in Saskatchewan.

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### **Ducks Unlimited Canada Land**

Ducks Unlimited Canada has long been involved in forage management and production programs in Saskatchewan. Their agrologists can help you make ecologically sustainable management decisions for your operation. Although some of the forage incentive programs from past years have been reduced for 2008, Ducks Unlimited staff can advise you on programs that are currently available.

DUC's also manages a significant number of acres throughout Saskatchewan and annually puts forth a listing of lands available for hay and/or grazing. Contact your local Ducks Unlimited office for more details on this program or for general information about DUC's visit their website at [www.ducks.ca](http://www.ducks.ca).

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### **Forages in Irrigated Cropping Systems**

*Sarah Sommerfeld, AAg*

*Irrigation Development Branch, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture*

The Statistics Canada seeding intentions report for March 31 indicated there could be 860,000 fewer summerfallow, pasture or hay land acres in 2008 compared to 2007 in Western Canada.

This was not as great a decline as expected, given the recent high prices for commodities, but it is still significant and may indicate some degree of uncertainty about commodity prices within the agriculture sector.

A true assessment of the irrigated forage acres in production for 2008 has not been determined to date, but the expectation is that there will be a decrease in acres. Irrigated pasture acres will likely fall this year due to the depressed cattle market relative to other cash crops. The investment into fences and watering sites has been committed and irrigated pasture grazing will occur when the economics return to a more positive outlook.

Irrigated corn acres are expected to remain stable as corn production for winter grazing and silage production have been adopted as alternative winter feeding strategies for many cattle operations.

Irrigated hay acres may decrease, but the acres remaining in production could be very profitable due to increasing market price and demand for hay, which may result from dry conditions in the province.

If irrigation farmers take forage acres out of production to capitalize on higher annual crop prices, they should do so with caution. Producers should not discount that, along with increased crop prices, crop input prices have substantially increased. Glyphosate has increased 15 per cent; fuel costs are up 20 per cent; fertilizer has doubled in price, and is projected to move higher; seed costs have doubled; and land prices have increased anywhere from 2 to 10 per cent.

While irrigated crop production diminishes the risk of crop failure due to drought, irrigation farmers carry the burden of increased costs of production due to greater fertilizer and chemical expenses and the costs of owning and/or operating the irrigation system. Irrigation farmers should consider incorporating or maintaining perennial forages within their irrigated cropping rotation to help decrease crop input expenses and increase on-farm cash income.

The benefits of including forages within a cropping rotation may include:

- Improvement in soil fertility when legumes are grown alone or in mixtures;
- Improved soil quality;
- Increased crop yields in subsequent years; and
- Decreased weed populations and improved disease management.

These benefits hold true both in dryland and irrigated cropping situations.

A 1995 survey of 253 Manitoba and Saskatchewan farmers indicated that yields of grain crops following forages were higher than yields of grain crops following annuals (Entz et al., 1995). Within that study, it was also documented that in areas where moisture was not limited, an increase in crop yield was noted following forages. As moisture was not a limiting factor, the increased yield could be attributed to the beneficial properties of forages such as increased soil organic matter content, increased soil nitrogen supply by legumes and improved soil drainage and structure.

An irrigated crop survey performed in 2007 indicated that 23 per cent of the irrigated acres within the Lake Diefenbaker Development Area were in forage production (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Canada-Saskatchewan Irrigation Diversification Corporation 2007). This acreage is likely to remain flat or decline in 2008 and over the next few years. As there will still be demand for forages, the best method for producers to capitalize on the advantages of including forages within their cropping rotations is to cycle forage crops through the rotation more quickly (Entz et al., 2002). The average duration of irrigated forage stands is five years or

greater. However, the benefits of including forages into the cropping rotation can be achieved in five years or less (Entz et al., 2002).

### References:

Entz, M.H., W.J. Bullied, and F. Katepa-Mupondwa. 1995. Rotational Benefits of Forage Crops in Canadian Prairie Cropping Systems. *J. Prod. Agric.* 8:521-529.

Entz, M.H., V.S. Baron, P.M. Carr, D.W. Meyer, S.R. Smith Jr., and W.P. McCaughey. 2002. Potential of Forages to Diversify Cropping Systems in the Northern Great Plains. *Agron. J.* 94:240-250.

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## Water Development and Supply Programs for Saskatchewan

Over the past months, both the federal and provincial governments have announced new or extended water supply development and enhancement programs aimed at improving the consistency and dependability of water supplies for agricultural needs in rural Saskatchewan.

The National Water Supply Expansion Program (NWSEP) began in 2003 as a federal-provincial initiative. The objective of the National Water Supply Expansion Program is to provide assistance to the agricultural community across Canada to help reduce the risk of future water shortages and to meet the everyday growing needs of the agricultural sector, through planning and development of secure, healthy and reliable water resources. In March 2008, the federal government announced that this program will receive a one year extension to March 31, 2009. The Canada-Saskatchewan Water Supply Expansion Program (CSWSEP) is the component of this program concerning projects in Saskatchewan. The CSWSEP provides financial assistance for water projects to meet agricultural needs. The following types of projects are eligible for funding under this program:



*Photo credit: L. Thompson, SFC*

**Tier One - On-farm water projects** - Smaller scale water development projects, such as dugouts, off-stream storage, wells and pasture pipelines, which provide secure, safe and reliable water supplies for agricultural producers or other agricultural water users in areas directly affected by drought or that have other water supply constraints.

**Tier Two - Multi-user water supplies** - Larger scale infrastructure projects which provide a long-term water source for multiple agricultural water users and promote economic growth in an area or region, such as tank loaders, regional pipelines and reservoirs.

**Tier Three - Strategic initiatives** - A study, planning activity or undertaking to develop information and technologies or the dissemination of information, including regional groundwater studies, groundwater exploration and testing, regional water management and water supply planning, feasibility studies, demonstration projects and information extension activities.

All projects must be complete prior to March 31, 2009.

Individual producers will mostly be looking at carrying out tier one projects. One third of the cost of approved projects (up to \$5000/project – where for example, one dugout = one project) will be covered by the federal government and if projects are undertaken in a designated area (defined by the Saskatchewan government) the province will contribute another %17 of the project costs to top up funding to %50. For more information on this program, or for applications for CSWESP projects, call 1-800-667-8567 or visit [www.agr.gc.ca/water](http://www.agr.gc.ca/water). The deadline for application for 2008-2009 program year projects is May 30, 2008.

The Saskatchewan government announced the details of the Farm and Ranch Water Infrastructure Program (FRWIP) on May 1, 2008. This program also has three components; the interim Emergency Community Projects; the On-Farm Component; and the Community Well Component.

The Interim Emergency component is intended to develop short-term water supply initiatives for emergency assistance in areas of critical water shortage. RMs in drought-designated areas of Southwest Saskatchewan are eligible for assistance under this component (see table below for list of eligible RMs). Funds for this component will be allocated to RMs carrying out approved projects to provide cost sharing of up to one half of the eligible costs (to a maximum of \$10,000). If any funding is received from other government programs, the FRWIP grant will be used to top up funding to %50 of the eligible costs. The deadline for applications to this portion of the program is June 17, 2008.

#### **List of eligible Rural Municipalities for FRWIP**

No. 8 – Lake Alma	No. 49 – White Valley	No. 110 – Piapot
No. 9 – Surprise Valley	No. 51 – Reno	No. 111 – Maple Creek
No. 10 – Happy Valley	No. 71 – Excel	No. 135 – Lawtonia
No. 11 – Hart Butte	No. 72 – Lake of the Rivers	No. 136 – Coulee
No. 12 – Poplar Valley	No. 73 – Stonehenge	No. 137 – Swift Current
No. 17 – Val Marie	No. 74 – Wood River	No. 138 – Webb
No. 18 – Lone Tree	No. 75 – Pinto Creek	No. 139 – Gull Lake
No. 19 – Frontier	No. 76 – Auvergne	No. 141 – Big Stick
No. 38 – Laurier	No. 77 – Wise Creek	No. 165 – Morse
No. 39 – The Gap	No. 78 – Grassy Creek	No. 166 – Excelsior
No. 40 – Bengough	No. 79 – Arlington	No. 167 – Saskatchewan Landin
No. 42 – Willow Bunch	No. 105 – Glen Bain	No. 168 – Riverside
No. 43 – Old Post	No. 106 – Whiska Creek	No. 169 – Pittville
No. 44 – Waverley	No. 107 – Lac Pelletier	No. 229 – Miry Creek
No. 45 – Mankota	No. 108 – Bone Creek	No. 230 – Clinworth
No. 46 – Glen McPherson	No. 109 – Carmichael	

The other two portions of this program will be ongoing initiatives to develop a more reliable water source through either the on-farm component for things such as wells and buried pipelines or the community well development component. These portions of the program are considered complementary to the CSWEP thus to apply, interested parties must send in a CSWEP application for their project by the May 30<sup>th</sup> deadline. As mentioned above, the provincial government funding for this portion of the water supply expansion program will be used to top up funding of project to %50 of the eligible costs.

For more information on the Saskatchewan FRWIP call 1-877-874-5365 or visit  
[www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/FRWIP](http://www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/FRWIP).

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## **Management of Common Forage Pests in Saskatchewan**

*Scott Hartley, Provincial Insect/Pest Management  
Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture*

### **Richardson's Ground Squirrel**

The Richardson's ground squirrel is commonly known as the "gopher" in southern Saskatchewan. It is a member of the squirrel family and differs from the pocket gopher, also an agricultural pest that is more common in northern and eastern areas of the Province.

The Richardson's ground squirrel has been problematic for many years, but has been of special concern to Saskatchewan producers for the past decade. This small rodent has traditionally been a pest in pastures throughout the southwest, west central and northwest depending on a number of factors including climate and predation. With the adoption of zero and minimum tillage farming systems, significant damage to cropland has been noted in recent years. Drier areas in the south west have been particularly hard hit by ground squirrel damage.

Control attempts have included a variety of methods including trapping, shooting and the use of various toxic rodenticides. Although these may include chlorphacinone (Rozol) and Zinc Phosphide (Burrowing Oat Bait), grain treated with strychnine has been the most preferred by producers. Strychnine baits have registrations as ready-to-use products (RTUs) in both dry and freshly mixed high moisture formulations. Currently there is an Emergency Use Registration for liquid strychnine concentrate, granted by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) that will expire July 31, 2008. As a condition of this approval, the PMRA expects the distribution of the concentrate to be limited to the worst affected areas.

More recently, aluminum phosphide (Phostoxin™) has been registered for Richardson's ground squirrel control. Phostoxin is a fumigant and has more commonly been used for control of insects in stored grain. It is important to note that this is a restricted use product and requires a special license for both purchase and application. Phostoxin is available in a solid pellet form and will not release the aluminum phosphide gas unless temperatures are above + 5 degrees and proper soil moisture conditions exist. This product represents significant health risk to applicators. SIAST has developed a fumigation course specifically for farmers and includes information on using fumigants for both stored grain insect control and ground squirrel control. Successful completion of the course will enable the participant to be licensed to purchase and use phostoxin.

Research projects are underway in Southwest Saskatchewan to study a number of aspects related to Richardson's ground squirrel. One of the projects starting in 2008 is the evaluation of the effectiveness of various rodenticides. Other components of the research include reviewing non-chemical control methods and the natural predation of the main mammalian predators (e.g. coyotes, badgers, weasels). Funding for the initial stages of these projects is coming from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture's Agriculture Development Fund.

## Alfalfa Weevil

The alfalfa weevil is primarily a pest to alfalfa in eastern and particularly, southeast Saskatchewan. This insect was formerly restricted to south of the #1 highway but the weevil has been extending its range northward and can now be found north of the Qu'Appelle Valley.

The alfalfa weevil over-winters as an adult in and around alfalfa fields in vegetative debris, soil and crowns of the alfalfa plants. Adults feed on stems, new shoots and shred leaf margins but this damage is generally not considered significant. Eggs are laid in previous years' alfalfa stems, leaf debris and new growth stems. Newly hatched larvae feed in the leaf and flower buds and more advanced larvae feed on the foliage. As the green plant tissue is consumed by the weevil, a field will develop a "silvery" appearance. The peak activity and damage is associated with the larvae, occurring from about mid-June to mid-July. Alfalfa weevil feeding will be more serious in seedling stands and if the crop is growing under dry conditions.

The larvae of the weevil can be brown to light green in colour. There is a light stripe down the middle of the back. The head is black, changing to brown at maturity.

If the alfalfa is intended for hay and the alfalfa has reached the bud or early bloom stage, cutting the crop will usually be sufficient as a non-chemical control option. However if damage is noted in the new growth, insecticide application will likely be required.

Economic thresholds for insecticide use in alfalfa **hay** may be considered when 25-50 per cent of the leaves on the upper one third of the stem show damage, or if 50-70 per cent of the terminals show injury. If the alfalfa is intended for **seed**, insecticide application should be considered if 20-25 larvae are collected in a sweep net sample, or 35-50 per cent of the foliage tips show damage.

Insecticides registered for alfalfa weevil control will severely affect pollinators and other beneficial insects so care should be taken if applying an insecticide while bees are foraging.

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## Report on Saskatchewan Pastures Program

In a press release put out by the provincial government on April 14, 2008, Agriculture Minister Bob Bjornerud said there were a number of grazing opportunities for Saskatchewan producers in the Northeast part of the province through the Saskatchewan Pastures Program (SPP). This announcement was made to help ease the strain on producers who were short of pasture, especially in the Southwest. Space was available at a number of provincial pastures in the Northeast with David Junk, Resource Technologist with Saskatchewan Agriculture in Tisdale as the contact person.

In a telephone conversation on May 26, 2008, Junk confirmed that all pastures spaces are now full. He reported that 14 producers from Southern Saskatchewan have confirmed spots in various pastures across the Northeast accounting for approximately 1000 head of cattle. Producers are responsible for trucking costs and must comply with all regulations and fees that normally apply as part of the SPP.

Cattle from the south will be accommodated at these pastures without changes to the recommended stocking rates. Junk says this was possible due to space opening up in the past

few years due to a number of factors in the area including retirement of ranchers and some conversion of livestock farms to grain farms.

Junk said that there were many inquiries when the announcement was first made, but that for many producers, it came down to trucking. "It's about 350 miles from Swift Current to Tisdale, so when you work out the cost of trucking, the economics just didn't work for a lot of producers".

Pastures in the Northeast will begin taking cattle next week (June 2) and the following week for the 2008 grazing season.

*Photo credit: L Thompson, SFC*



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### Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Deadlines:

The following is a list of Saskatchewan Crop Insurance deadlines to keep in mind for forage crops in the upcoming months.

**June 10, 2008** – Yield loss coverage becomes effective on winter wheat and fall rye grazed and/or cut for feed.

**June 20, 2008** – Under forage establishment benefits option, seeding deadline for acres seeded in 2008.

- Deadline to submit forage establishment benefit claims and gopher damage claims for crops seeded in 2007.

**June 25, 2008** – deadline to submit seeded acreage report for 2008 (excludes greenfeed).

**June 30, 2008** – deadline to seed greenfeed crops covered by forage insurance.

- Deadline to submit all greenfeed establishment claims

**July 5, 2008** – deadline to report seeded greenfeed acres.

For more information on Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Programs and deadlines visit their website at [www.saskcropinsurance.com](http://www.saskcropinsurance.com).

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**Saskatchewan Hay Market Report**  
*Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture*  
[www.agr.gov.sk.ca/feedforage](http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/feedforage)

**Baled Forage Prices (dollars per ton) to May 26, 2008**

	Listings	Listings Priced	Tons Listed	Tons Priced	Lowest Price/ton	Highest Price/ton	Weighted Average Price/ton
<b>Alfalfa</b>	6	5	1,484	1,484	\$40	\$72	\$63
<b>Clover</b>	2	2	284	284	\$40	\$46	\$41
<b>Other</b>	1	1	16	16	\$50	\$50	\$50

**USDA Market News Service Hay Reports**  
*USDA Market News Service*

**Wyoming, Western Nebraska, and Western South Dakota Weekly Hay Summary**  
*Dennis Widga, Torrington, WY*  
[www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/to\\_gr310.txt](http://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/to_gr310.txt)

Prices steady. Trade and movement remain light. Demand moderate to good. Available supplies limited in most areas. Reports that a lot of alfalfa acres are being planted into corn or beans this spring. Eastern Wyoming and western Nebraska remain dry. Good moisture from snow reported in South Dakota.

**Weekly Montana Hay Report**  
*Justin Lumpkin, Billings, MT*  
[www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/bl\\_gr310.txt](http://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/bl_gr310.txt)

No reported sales of alfalfa/grass hay this week, sales of Timothy hay remain steady. Nice rains across the state this week bringing much needed spring rains, 2+ inches in places. No reported new crop contracts for alfalfa hay, growers report there is plenty of interest to contract but growers aren't sure where to price their hay at yet.

	Eastern Wyoming	Central & Western Wyoming	Western South Dakota	Montana
<b>Alfalfa</b>				
Supreme	\$135.00-150.00	\$120.00-130.00		
Premium	\$120.00-135.00	\$110.00-125.00	\$90.00-110.00	
Good	\$110.00-120.00		\$70.00-90.00	
Fair -Good	\$95.00-115.00	\$100.00-110.00	\$60.00-70.00	
<b>Mixed Grass</b>	\$126.00-140.00	\$110.00-120.00	\$80.00	
<b>Timothy- Premium</b>				\$120.00-150.00
<b>Alfalfa/Grass</b>		\$90.00-110.00	\$80.00-110.00	

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

### **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 mould. RFV: <130

### **Thank you to Saskatchewan Forage Council Sponsors:**



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**Leanne Thompson, MSc, PAg**

Project Coordinator, Saskatchewan Forage Council  
PO Box 263  
Ceylon, SK S0C 0T0  
Phone: 306.454.2777  
E-mail: [office@saskforage.ca](mailto:office@saskforage.ca)

**Janice Bruynooghe, MSc, PAg**

Executive Director, Saskatchewan Forage Council  
PO Box 1715  
Outlook, SK S0L 2N0  
Phone: 306.966.2148  
E-mail: [jbruynooghe@saskforage.ca](mailto:jbruynooghe@saskforage.ca)

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