



# Saskatchewan Hay & Pasture Report

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## Note from the Saskatchewan Forage Council

With fall just around the corner, some feel that we were short changed on our summer. The cool July may not have been ideal for going to the lake, but it was a benefit to areas that were a little drier, in terms of extending pastures. Ripening conditions improved throughout August, as warmer days more typical for our prairie summer arrived. Reports from across the province indicate that the majority of hay production is now complete, with the bulk of remaining forage being greenfeed and second cuts. Hay production around the province is quite variable, however, a significant number of producers are reporting hay yields less than a year ago. As operations begin to source feed for the coming winter, some areas may find it more difficult than anticipated. In this issue of the *Saskatchewan Hay & Pasture Report*, you will find details on regional crop conditions, a focus on a new alfalfa variety, a summary of the forage seed supplies, a report discussing polycultures, an overview of the World Dairy Expo, an analysis of the US hay production, and a highlight of an alternative ornamentals website. In addition, you will find a summary of forage market information from SK and surrounding jurisdictions.

As always, 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. - *Hay Report Editor, Coy Schellenberg*

## Saskatchewan Agriculture Crop Report

*(for period ending August 26, 2013)*

Harvest is underway in all regions of the province. Warm weather with very few rain interruptions over the past week has helped speed crop development. Five per cent of the 2013 provincial crop has been combined, while 14 per cent has been swathed or is ready to straight cut, according to Saskatchewan Agriculture's Weekly Crop Report.

While harvest is behind the five-year average for this time of year, above average yields are being reported for most areas. The five-year average (2008-2012) is 15 per cent combined and 22 per cent swathed or ready to straight cut. Harvest operations in the southwest region are the furthest ahead with 14 per cent of the 2013 crop combined.

Across the province, 34 per cent of peas, 20 per cent of lentils, 27 per cent of winter wheat and 10 per cent of mustard have been combined. Twenty-six per cent of canola has been swathed. Spring cereals are maturing and in some areas producers have started swathing or are ready to straight cut the crops.

Rain recorded in the province last week ranged from nil to 31 mm. Grasshoppers and bertha armyworm caused some of the reported crop damage.

Farmers in all regions are busy swathing, desiccating, combining and cutting and baling greenfeed.

For a breakdown of regional conditions, please visit the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture's [Crop Report online](#).

## New Forage Variety – Yellowhead Alfalfa

*Coy Schellenberg, Project Coordinator, Saskatchewan Forage Council*

A new forage variety has been capturing a lot of attention in the research world in recent years. Yellowhead alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* subsp. *Falcata* L.) was developed at the Semiarid Prairie Agricultural Research Centre (SPARC) of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) in Swift Current, SK. It is a yellow flowering alfalfa with sickle shaped seed pods.



*Yellowhead Alfalfa Flowers*  
Photo: Calvin Yoder, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (AARD)

Research and efforts in search of this new variety have a history that goes back to the 1970's. Programming and research continued to be drawn back to the table throughout the years since then, in an intense effort to create the right cultivar that could provide additional benefits to forage and livestock producers in Canada. Yellowhead alfalfa was extensively tested and eventually released in 2007. In 2008, Yellowhead was provided with cultivar registration through the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

Prior to its release and during its years of research at SPARC - AAFC and elsewhere in western Canada, Yellowhead proved to have characteristics that represented an improvement in winter survival, with good persistence under grazing pressure and in mixed stands. It appeared to have similar first cut yields as the standard purple flowered cultivars, however, it had slower re-growth characteristics. The slow re-growth of Yellowhead is thought to be the characteristic that allows it to avoid excessive grazing, which results in its improved persistence, according to SPARC - AAFC. It also goes dormant earlier in the fall, which gives it excellent winter hardiness. Long term stand persistence, even under grazing, is the key characteristic of this cultivar.



*Yellowhead Alfalfa Seed Field*  
Photo: Calvin Yoder, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (AARD)

Even though it was released in 2007, there is still no seed available. "One of the difficulties with *falcata* type alfalfas like Yellowhead is that they do not produce as much seed as regular *sativa* types of alfalfa. No seed had been produced since the release of Yellowhead in 2007," explains Bruce Coulman, University of

Saskatchewan, Forage Breeder and Forage Crops Professor. In 2012, seed was provided to a forage seed grower in Alberta for increase, and observations on the field this summer indicate a large potential seed production. This will hopefully make seed of Yellowhead available to producers over the next few years, and the great potential of this unique variety will be realized.

## Forage Seed Supplies

*Ray McVicar, Executive Director, Saskatchewan Forage Seed Development Commission*

*Background information for this article was provided by AG-Vision Seeds, Pickseed Canada, Brett Young Seeds, and Northstar Seed Ltd.*

As another growing season winds down it is time to take a quick look at this year's forage seed crop and the forage seed supply situation.



*Hybrid bromegrass seed crop nearing harvest in Carrot River  
Photo: SK Forage Seed Development Commission*

Like other crop producers, forage seed growers have had a challenging year. Many areas of the Prairies experienced a late spring, leaving growers wondering if they would complete seeding and contemplating changes in their cropping plans. Wet soils also complicated seeding, however, in the case of established forage crops, many are better able to withstand "wet feet" and thrive when compared to annual crops.

Regarding this year's forage seed crops, northeast Saskatchewan and some areas of the Peace River Region have experienced a lot of rain. This rainy weather also meant low temperatures and cloudy conditions at flowering and seed set and reduced bee activity. As a result, bromegrass and alfalfa crops appear below average for seed production. The long winter was hard on perennial ryegrass and yields appear to be lower. At the time of writing this article, timothy was being swathed and combined, and average yields are expected. Clover crops look above

average with good seed yield potential as long as the weather cooperates for harvest. Other grasses such as Dahurian wild rye and slender wheatgrass appear to be headed toward good yields.

The growing season in central Manitoba has been good and forage seed crops there appear better than in northeast Saskatchewan. Crops in northern Alberta also appear to have good seed yield potential if harvest weather cooperates. Overall, an average forage seed crop is expected in the Prairies in 2013.

Inventories of most forage seed crops have been tight for some time. Just like other crops, forages have been competing for acres with high-priced canola and wheat. Forage seed acres have been declining at the same time that sales in North America and Europe have been good. In fact, farmers in the traditional forage seed growing areas of Europe have also been converting acres to canola, leaving inventories in Europe tight as well.

The more common forage crops such as meadow and smooth brome are almost sold out. However, there appears to be a large smooth brome seed crop in the mid-west

USA as growers there responded to high seed prices. USA alfalfa crops appear to be about average, while Australia had a large alfalfa seed crop. The forage and turf seed harvest in Oregon is going well with average yields reported, while growers in Missouri harvested a large tall fescue crop that will likely affect the lawn / turf market.

There are some new forage varieties that should be available in the spring of 2014. For example, the new sainfoin variety Mountainview that was featured in the June edition of the *Saskatchewan Hay and Pasture Report* was recently awarded to Northstar Seed. Northstar also plans to have Cache Meadow Brome and Rugged ST Alfalfa available. Growers should check with their forage seed suppliers as all companies will provide more information on new forage crops and varieties.

In summary, forage seed supplies are tight for most species as there were good sales to growers this past spring and seed production acres have declined. Exports to USA and Europe have been good. No severe shortages of any species are expected, so prices will likely not change a lot on the majority of crops. Seed inventories depend a lot on the crop that is currently in the field, so let's hope for great harvest weather!

For more information about the forage seed situation, contact Ray McVicar at: [raymcvicar@gmail.com](mailto:raymcvicar@gmail.com) or visit the SFSDC website: [www.skforageseedc.com](http://www.skforageseedc.com)

## Polycultures-Cocktail Mix for the Semiarid Prairies

*Semiarid Prairie Agriculture Research Centre (SPARC) - Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC)*

While summer may be a time best associated with cocktails on the patio or tipples by the pool, mixed drinks are not what's on the minds of researchers at Agriculture and Agri-Food (AAFC) in Swift Current. For them, *mixed plantings* are the greater concern...

Polyculture cover crops, also known as multi-species or cocktail mixtures, are the intentional co-planting of a variety of species of plants, particularly for forage applications. Anecdotal evidence from the northern US and a few locations in Canada indicates that these mixtures could improve yield, amount of soil organic matter, moisture retention, and weed and insect control- a potentially great benefit to farmers.

In spring 2013, Dr. Mike Schellenberg of AAFC's Semiarid Prairie Agricultural Research Centre (SPARC), began investigating whether these benefits would also be seen in the brown soil zone of southwest Saskatchewan and eastern Alberta. Funding for the research was provided through the Saskatchewan Agriculture Development Fund and the Southwest Forage Association.

"This was a producer driven question, with an orientation towards forages," said Dr. Schellenberg. "It's a start on a question that will have larger advantages down the road, possibly including increased crop flexibility and productivity and decreased erosion."



*A plot containing 8 different species  
Photo: SPARC - AAFC*

### So how many species make an optimal polyculture?

Because the research is still in its infancy, that is an open question at this point, notes Dr. Schellenberg. Existing research proves biodiversity tends to improve the system's ability to cope with failure - some of the species do better in drought, others in wet, windy or other extreme conditions, so no matter what the climate, something is bound to survive.

### But what is the optimal mix for semiarid forages?

Dr. Schellenberg and his colleague Dr. Jillian Bainard have started to answer this question. They have identified four different functional groups of plants that are known to work well in polycultures, including cool and warm season grasses (traditional forages), legumes (which fix nitrogen) and brassica root crops such as radish and turnips (which are known to penetrate hard pan and compacted soils). Given that each functional group contains many individual species and has a different interplay with the environment, only 34 combinations and controls are being tested of the numerous possibilities, with up to 12 species co-planted on one plot. Species selected are already grown in the area and are therefore known to be adapted to the region.

The first year of the study will determine a baseline for comparison. Then they'll run the experiment for three years and compare their findings to standard practices like perennial crops and rotations.

"We're looking for hard numbers over the next years," Dr. Schellenberg said. "We want to see the impact three years in a row to determine additive effects on soil nutrition and which combination is having the best effect with the least input."

### Nutritional Package and Other Benefits

Dr. Schellenberg's team is also looking at the nutritional package of these combinations of annual forages. Evaluations will be done in late July and at the end of the season, so that producers will be able to see how the mixes rate in terms of forage quality.

Another potential use for polycultures may be as a green manure - that is, growing the crop and working it into the soil to improve soil productivity, which is a practice more common in organic farming. While this is not the focus of the current research, the data would be available for future study.



*Just some of the 34 polyculture plots being tested  
Photo: SPARC - AAFC*

For more information contact Dr. Mike Schellenberg, SPARC - AAFC, at: (306) 778-7247 or [mike.schellenberg@agr.gc.ca](mailto:mike.schellenberg@agr.gc.ca)

## CFGA at the World Dairy Expo

*Coy Schellenberg, Project Coordinator, Saskatchewan Forage Council*

The Canadian Forage and Grassland Association (CFGA) is gearing up for the 2013 World Dairy Expo to be held in Madison, Wisconsin October 1-5, 2013. The World Dairy Expo serves as a forum for dairy producers, companies, organizations and

other dairy enthusiasts to come together to compete, and to exchange ideas, knowledge, technology and commerce.

With a history of over 65,000 attendees and a 775 company trade show, it could very well be one of the largest forage industry events in North America and beyond. Producers and industry alike have an awesome opportunity to see cutting edge technology, talk one-on-one with leading researchers from around the world, and to see the latest technology for the dairy industry. The Expo is always busy with impressive seminars, tours, dairy cattle shows, and sales. Oh, and we must not forget the prestigious Forage Superbowl!

The World Dairy Expo is well known for its' immense international component, and representatives from all over the world come to attend. It attracts individuals, companies, and Government groups from many countries. This is a main event for dairy producers across the globe and an incredibly important place to be for hay exporters everywhere.

The CFGA recognizes the importance of the World Dairy Expo as a forage industry event, and that is why they continue to attend and participate. "The Expo is an important opportunity for the CFGA to increase market access and awareness of Canadian forage products with not only dairy producers but also with other US forage importers and overseas importers," explains CFGA Executive Director Wayne Digby.



CFGGA Market Development Popup Banners for Display  
Photo: Canadian Forage and Grassland Association

The Expo presents an excellent opportunity to make contacts and create awareness and support for the CFGA because of the many different companies from all aspects of the dairy and forage related industries that are present. The CFGA also recognizes the thick US market presence because the Expo is held in the United States. "The US market is a very large and valuable market for Canadian forage products and the World Dairy Expo is an important venue for continuing to develop access into this market," shares Digby.

This will be the third year for the CFGA to have a booth at the World Dairy Expo. This is accomplished because of a joint effort of representatives from the various Provincial sectors coming together in a partnership, including involvement from our own Saskatchewan Forage Council (SFC).

"The SFC is working to help the CFGA find a representative from Saskatchewan to attend all or part of the Expo. This is an excellent opportunity for a hay marketer from Saskatchewan to make contacts in the US and to gain important knowledge regarding export markets," expresses SFC Executive Director Leanne Thompson. If you are a hay exporter from Saskatchewan and are interested in attending the World Dairy Expo, please contact the SFC by September 2, 2013.

For more information about the World Dairy Expo or to express interest in attending, contact Leanne Thompson, Executive Director, Saskatchewan Forage Council at: (306) 969-2666 or [office@saskforage.ca](mailto:office@saskforage.ca)

## USDA Report: Hay Production Nudges Upward

*Rick Mooney, Hay & Forage Grower - eHay Weekly (August 20, 2013)*

Hay sellers looking for last year's record-high hay prices to continue through winter are likely to be disappointed in last week's USDA [Crop Production](#) report.

"Prices will still be high by historical standards, but not as high as what we saw last year or the year before," says Katelyn McCulloch, dairy-forage economist with the [Livestock Marketing Information Center](#) in Denver, CO.



Rebounding hay production will likely put some downward pressure on hay prices, say market analysts following a report from USDA last week  
Photo: Rick Mooney

The combined estimated U.S. yield for the alfalfa-alfalfa mixed dry hay and other-hay categories will average 2.47 tons/acre in 2013, says Matt Diersen, ag economist with South Dakota State University Extension. "That's a pretty good national yield. It's not something that's going to completely wreck prices for hay sellers. But it certainly does a lot to take some of the supply side pressure off of hay prices."

USDA estimates U.S. growers will harvest nearly 60 million tons of alfalfa and alfalfa mixes as dry hay in 2013. That's up 15% from last year's total, but still the second-lowest hay production level since 1955. Based on Aug. 1 conditions, yields for alfalfa-alfalfa mixes will average 3.39 tons/acre, up roughly one-third of a ton from last year's average. Harvested area is forecast at 17.7 million acres, up 2% compared to last year's total.

Production of other hay this year is forecast to total 80 million tons, up 18% from the 2012 total. If realized, that would be the highest production since 2004. As of Aug. 1, USDA was expecting an other-hay average yield of 2.05 tons/acre, up 0.31 ton from last year's yield total. Harvested area is projected at 39 million acres, unchanged from that of 2012.

Along with increased production estimates, several other factors will likely work to put downward pressure on hay supplies and prices in the months ahead, Diersen says. There have been reports of recent pasture-and-range-condition improvements in areas hit by drought earlier this summer. That could mean livestock producers will be able to delay feeding supplemental hay until well into late fall or early winter. Likewise, USDA's decision to allow emergency haying and grazing on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres should boost supply availability in drought-stricken regions.

Alfalfa hay quality has been a concern in areas hindered by weather-related problems during early cuttings. But Diersen believes that will be offset by major boosts in corn and soybean production this year. Plentiful supplies of alternative protein sources like distillers' grains and soybean meal will limit the upside price potential for higher-quality alfalfa.

The impact of increased grain supplies on alfalfa prices likely won't be felt until this fall's harvest. "We're hearing a lot of reports that many livestock producers are buying hand-to-mouth right now as everybody waits for prices to decline in the fourth quarter of the year," he says.

But there could also be a positive to lower alternative feed costs for hay growers selling into the dairy and beef markets. “With their margins improving, (livestock producers) will have more dollars available to pay for higher-quality hay if they decide they need it in their rations,” says Diersen.

To view the original *eHay Weekly* article, [click here](#).

## Great Garden Alternatives Hits the Web

*Virginia Battiste, Freelance Writer*

After a career in Landscape Design in Saskatchewan, and Invasive Plant Management across Alberta, Don Battiste, has combined his wealth of expertise and knowledge to launch a new website. Called *Great Garden Alternatives*, the site features invasive ornamental plants posing a threat to crop and range lands, as well as natural ecosystems, across the prairie landscape.



*Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) on Purple Loosestrife  
Photo: Don Battiste*

Battiste, who holds a degree in Horticulture from the University of Saskatchewan, as well as Certificates as a Landscape Technician from Wascana Institute and in Sustainable Landscapes University of Guelph, admits as a designer to having used ornamental plants that are now considered to be invasive. It took a stint as the South Region Weed Coordinator, followed by three years as the Program Director for the Alberta Invasive Plants Council, to alert him to the dangers and damage that invasive ornamentals could inflict on natural areas from wetlands of Manitoba, across the plains of Regina, to the foothills of the Rockies, and up its Eastern slopes.

"For the most part, as landscapers or gardeners, many of us didn't stop to consider the impact on natural areas if some of these wonderfully attractive floral specimens from other

continents escaped into the wild."

Battiste says that exactly the characteristics that made these plants so desirable in the garden are the reason they are such a threat in the wild. They propagate readily, have vigorous growth, and tend to out compete native plants to the point of outgrowing them and changing the biodiversity that everything natural, from microorganisms in the soil, through insects, to birds and all types of wildlife, depend on to survive. There are also no natural enemies to hold them in check.

"Oxeye Daisy peppers the ditches along the highways leading into Banff, and they have been seen as high up the slopes of the Rockies as the vegetation line reaches. Once considered the most desirable plant in the garden, escaping into the wild has proven to be more troublesome for our native areas than anyone would have imagined."

Being vigilant to recognize and respond to the invasive plants in one's area is a key step to dealing with these unwanted invaders. The other thing that landowners or gardeners can do is to plant alternatives that provide a similar look, but are known to not be a threat to the natural landscape.

While still building the website, Battiste lists several known invasives, the threat, and alternatives that could be utilized instead of the ones that can become a danger

in the wild. He also provides links to other sources of information that will assist in fighting the fight against ornamental invasives and protecting the natural heritage of native vegetation for a healthy habitat for tomorrow.

Website: Great Garden Alternatives  
<http://www.greatgardenalternatives.com/index.html>  
 Twitter: <https://twitter.com/invaderwatcher>  
 Email: [greatgardenalternatives4u@gmail.com](mailto:greatgardenalternatives4u@gmail.com)  
 Skype: don.battiste  
 Phone: 403-982-7923/403-467-7904

## Saskatchewan Hay Market Report

Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture  
[www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/FeedForageListing](http://www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/FeedForageListing)

### As Listed Forage Prices (\$ / metric Tonne) - August 29, 2013

Baled Forage	Listings	Listings Priced	Tonnes Listed	Tonnes Priced	Lowest Price/T	Highest Price/T	Weighted Average Price/T
Alfalfa	4	3	1045	920	\$59	\$132	\$85
Alfalfa/Grass	3	3	1017	1017	\$70	\$99	\$89
Grass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Clover	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Green Feed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Straw	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Listings	Listings Priced	Acres Listed	Acres Priced	Price/lb Range	Price/T Range	Price/Acre Range
Standing Forage	2	2	160	160	\$0.016-\$0.02	\$35-\$45	-

\*Small squares

One pasture listing was also found:

- \$100/head/season - pasture capacity of 25 animals

## USDA Market News Service Hay Report

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) collects a wide variety of information from hay markets across the country. Presented below is information from those jurisdictions closest to Saskatchewan. For complete USDA hay market listings, please visit the [USDA Market News](http://www.usda.gov/mnreports/) webpage.

Wyoming, Western Nebraska, and Western South Dakota  
 Weekly Hay Summary (Week ending August 23, 2013)  
 Dennis Widga, Torrington, WY

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

Limited comparable sales this week however a lower undertone was noted on all classes. Demand continues to be very light on slow trade. Producers and buyers alike

are reluctant to participate in the current market conditions due to price instability. The USDA forecasts Wyoming, Western Nebraska, and Western South Dakota hay production for 2013 to be up 23 percent for alfalfa and nearly 30 percent for all other hay. Nationally alfalfa production is forecasted to be up 15 percent from 2012 and all other hays are predicted to be up 18 percent from last year's numbers. Even with the dramatic increase it is still the second lowest hay production year since 1955.

#### Weekly Montana Hay Report (Week ending August 23, 2013)

Justin Lumpkin, Billings, MT

[www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/bl\\_gr310.txt](http://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/bl_gr310.txt)

All classes of hay remain steady. More sales reported this week, interest very good but there still remains a lot of hay to sell. Buyers of cow/feeder hay aren't working as aggressively to buy hay, many are content to wait until hay feeding time nears before they buy any. Hot temps returned to the state again this week which is helping to cure hay quickly and allowing growers to put up higher quality hay. Irrigating water becoming short in the southern tier of Montana, more plentiful in the central and northern tier. Majority of the state is in need of rain in order for producers to get another cutting.

#### Prices are for the week ending August 23, 2013

	Eastern Wyoming	Central & Western Wyoming	Western Nebraska & South Dakota	Montana
<b>Alfalfa</b>				
Supreme	-	-	\$235	\$180
Premium	\$215	\$175-180 \$195**	\$230	\$240**
Good	\$200-215 \$190*	\$150	\$200	\$160 \$150* \$200**
Fair -Good	-	-	-	\$130 \$100*
<b>Grass</b>	\$150	\$100	\$150	\$160 \$180**
<b>Timothy</b>	-	-	-	-

All prices in U.S. dollars per ton FOB stack in large square bales unless otherwise noted.

Most horse hay sold in small squares.

\* large rounds \*\*small squares

#### 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

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