Saskatchewan Hay & Pasture Report

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Inside This Issue:

Note from the Saskatchewan Forage Council

Reports from around the province indicate that haying season has begun in most areas. With the above average precipitation experienced during much of the spring and early summer, forage yields will likely be above average. With favourable weather, much of the province should be positioned to put up a high quality, high yield hay crop. This issue of the *Saskatchewan Hay & Pasture Report* presents a number of articles related to forage management during wet periods, details on a new invasive plant control factsheet and much more.

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. You may also want to visit our website www.saskforage.ca for regular news and information related to the forage industry.

Saskatchewan Agriculture Crop Report (for periods ending July 4 and July 11, 2011)

Southeastern Saskatchewan:

Week ending July 4, 2011

The recent warm and sunny weather has helped improve conditions however there are large areas of crops that have been flooded out. The southeast region recorded rain in varying amounts (nil to 31 mm), with some areas recording heavy rain with thunderstorms. The Weyburn area has recorded 391 mm of rain since April 1. Some livestock producers were able to get greenfeed crops seeded. Haying has started in the region, although crop reporters are expressing concerns about navigating through the wet areas and laying the swath down on the wet ground. There are areas of hay fields that are flooded out. Crop reporters are predicting there will be many acres of hay land that will not be accessible. The region has five per cent of the hay cut and one per cent baled or put into silage. Seventy-four per cent of the hay is rated as good to excellent in quality. Hay and pasture land is rated as 51 per cent surplus and 49 per cent adequate.

Week ending July 11, 2011

The recent warm and sunny weather has helped improve field conditions. The southeast region recorded rain in varying amounts (nil to 47 mm), with some areas recording heavy rain and damaging winds with thunderstorms. Hail was reported in the Moose Jaw area. Sixteen per cent of the hay has been cut in the region, and five per cent has been baled or put into silage. High humidity is slowing the drying

process. Eighty-seven per cent of the hay is rated as good to excellent in quality. Crop reporters are predicting there will be many acres of hay land that will not be accessible. Topsoil moisture on hay and pasture land is rated as 25 per cent surplus, 74 per cent adequate and one per cent short.

Southwestern Saskatchewan:
Week ending July 4, 2011
Thunderstorms dropped varying amounts of rain (5-34 mm) and hail in some areas. The warmer weather over the past week has improved crop conditions. Eleven per cent of the hay crop has been cut and four per cent has been baled or put into silage. Crop reporters are rating quality as 86 per cent good to excellent. Some crop reporters have indicated there are producers seeding green feed crops.
Hay land and pasture topsoil moisture is rated as 12 per cent surplus, 84 per cent adequate and four per cent short.


Photo Credit: L Thompson

Week ending July 11, 2011
Most of the region received very little rain for the week allowing for good haying progress in the region. Twenty-five per cent of the 2011 hay crop has been cut and 21 per cent has been baled or put into silage. Ninety-seven per cent of the hay is rated as good to excellent in quality. The hay is slow to dry as the ground is wet and the humidity is high. Hay land and pasture topsoil moisture is rated as two per cent surplus, 89 per cent adequate and nine per cent short. Hail was reported in the Swift Current, Consul and Maple Creek areas. There are areas that could use a good rain, especially on the lighter land. Lightning was the cause of two prairie fires in the Gull Lake area.

East-Central Saskatchewan
Week ending July 4, 2011
Nine per cent of the 2011 hay crop has been cut and two per cent has been baled or put into silage. Hay quality is rated as 70 per cent good to excellent. Thunderstorms dropped varying amounts of rain (trace to 86 mm), and brought strong winds and hail in some areas. Hay is slow to dry due to high humidity and damp ground. Hay land and pasture topsoil moisture is rated as 35 per cent surplus, 64 per cent adequate and one per cent short.

Week ending July 11, 2011
Eighteen per cent of the 2011 hay crop has been cut and 20 per cent has been baled or put into silage. Hay quality is rated as 80 per cent good to excellent. Thunderstorms dropped varying amounts of rain, and brought strong winds and hail in some areas, disrupting haying operations for a while. The amount of rain reported varied from trace amounts to 35 mm. Hay land and pasture topsoil moisture is rated as 25 per cent surplus, 72 per cent adequate and three per cent short.

West-Central Saskatchewan
Week ending July 4, 2011
A week of sunny weather with very little rain (range from nil to 26 mm) has haying off to a good start. Thirteen per cent of the hay crop has been cut and three per cent has been baled or put into silage. Hay quality is rated as 83 per cent good to excellent. Hay land and pasture topsoil moisture conditions are rated as six per cent surplus, 83 per cent adequate, 10 per cent short and one per cent very short.
The recent warm weather has helped advance crops, hay and pasture land. There are some areas that could use some rain.

Week ending July 11, 2011

A week of sunny weather with very little rain (for most areas) allowed producers to gain an additional 16 per cent in haying progress. The region now has 29 per cent of the 2011 hay crop cut and 20 per is baled or put into silage. Hay quality is rated as 69 per cent good to excellent. Rain was reported in varying amounts ranging from nil to 40 mm. Some areas reported showers off and on for a couple of days that resulted in hay quality loss. Hay land and pasture topsoil moisture conditions are rated as four per cent surplus, 73 per cent adequate, 19 per cent short and four per cent very short.

Northeastern Saskatchewan

Week ending July 4, 2011

Livestock producers had a good week of haying, with few weather disruptions. Thirteen per cent of the hay crop has been cut and three per cent is baled or put into silage. Hay quality is rated as 69 per cent good to excellent. Varying amounts of rain were recorded in the area ranging from 2 – 32 mm). Topsoil moisture on hay and pasture land is reported as 20 per cent surplus and 80 per cent adequate.

Week ending July 11, 2011

Livestock producers had a good few days of haying earlier in the week. Twenty-seven per cent of the hay crop has been cut and 17 per cent is baled or put into silage. Hay quality is rated as 87 per cent good to excellent. On July 8, many areas, particularly in crop district 8A received rain, which slowed haying operations for a little while. Topsoil moisture on hay and pasture land is reported as five per cent surplus, 92 per cent adequate and three per cent short. Of the crop damage reported, disease and wind is causing the majority of the damage. Hail was reported in the Prince Albert area.

Northwestern Saskatchewan

Week ending July 4, 2011

Livestock producers in the region have just starting haying. Two per cent of the region's hay is cut and few bales have been rolled up. Thunderstorms were reported in the northwestern part of the region. Precipitation ranged from trace amounts to 32 mm. Total rainfall recorded in the region since April 1 ranges from 80 to 343 mm. Hay and pasture topsoil moisture is rated as one per cent surplus, 88 per cent adequate, eight per cent short and three per cent very short.

Week ending July 11, 2011

Livestock producers in the region have nicely started haying with six per cent of the hay crop cut and five per cent baled or put into silage. Thunderstorms were reported in the northwestern part of the region, slowing haying progress. Precipitation ranged from six mm to 28 mm. Total rainfall recorded in the region since April 1 ranges from 102 to 355 mm. Hay and pasture topsoil moisture is rated as one per cent surplus, 97 per cent adequate and two per cent short.

Getting the Word Out on Invasive Species

Saskatchewan Forage Council

Invasive plant species are present in Saskatchewan and pose a significant threat to local resources, natural biodiversity, native prairie habitat and economic stability for the industry. The presence of invasive species results in the loss of productive land, markets for forage products and production capacity of harvested and grazed

areas. The industry recognizes that as land managers and producers, it is essential to increase awareness and develop the tools necessary to address this issue.

The Saskatchewan Forage Council along with industry partners is currently working on a project focusing on an increased awareness of invasive plant species in Saskatchewan and the development of strategies to prevent their introduction and potential spread. This collaborative project, with input from across the forage and livestock industry, will position the industry to proactively deal with this very real threat.

As part of this initiative, the fourth in a series of five factsheets was recently released. The newly released factsheet, *HAY: BMPs for Invasive Plant Species*, presents beneficial management practices (BMPs) for prevention and control of invasive plant species within the hay industry.

To view an electronic version of the *HAY: BMPs for Invasive Plant Species* factsheet, click here. In addition, online versions of the first three factsheets in the series including FORAGE SEED, GRAZING and RIPARIAN, are available by visiting the SFC website. Print copies of all factsheets are available by contacting the SFC at 306.867.8126 or office@saskforage.ca.

Stay tuned for the release of the final factsheet in this series focusing on the *TRANSPORTATION* sector of the forage industry.

The larger project consists of three main components, including education and awareness, completion of a strategic assessment and feasibility study, and delivery of a weed free forage pilot project. Building on the successes and experiences of the Frenchman – Wood River Weed Management Area, the pilot project will explore the logistics and impact of certifying weed free forage and evaluate potential success and failures as determined by industry stakeholders.

For more information and updates on this project, please visit the SFC website at www.saskforage.ca.

Grazing Concerns during Wet Conditions

Murray Feist, PAg
Ruminant Nutrition Specialist, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

Each spring, thousands of livestock are turned loose onto Saskatchewan pastures for grazing. And each grazing season, many factors need to be considered for the health and welfare of those livestock. Mineral consumption, water quality, and foot root are common concerns; in extreme situations anthrax can also re-surface as a major concern. It is common for ranchers to encounter problems with cattle not consuming minerals, re-adjusting their watering habits, and suffering from foot rot. As if those issues are not enough, each year several producers experience the unfortunate phenomenon of frothy bloat. No matter the location in the province

or month of grazing, cattle and sheep have troubled producers with their unique ability to find individual alfalfa plants, consume them and bloat.

Yearling steers grazing alfalfa/grass pasture. Photo Credit: L Thompson

Frothy alfalfa bloat is a constant risk for livestock when grazing alfalfa. The rules of alfalfa grazing are well known and have been extensively published by governments, universities and other organizations. As of July 2011, a Google search for "grazing alfalfa bloat" resulted in over 64,000 web page hits! Tips, techniques and management risks are all outlined, providing producers with an arsenal of information. Unfortunately, most cattle don't read Google, so risk management schemes have to be utilized to protect them.

For producers managing pasture containing alfalfa, special consideration will be required to minimize bloat risk. When palatable grasses such as meadow bromegrass are grown with alfalfa there is lower risk of bloat, as cattle dilute alfalfa with slower digesting grass forage. However, uneven distribution of alfalfa across a field can result in "hotspots" of high alfalfa concentration, potentially increasing bloat risk. Stage of alfalfa development will impact on bloat risk. As alfalfa matures, fibre content of the plant increases and reduces the rate of initial digestion, and reduces bloat occurrence. In 2011, alfalfa developed slowly due to cool spring conditions, extending bloat risk later into the year compared to a year with move normal growing conditions.

What are the impacts of excessive moisture on alfalfa and what are the resulting implications for producers to control bloat? Record rainfall and flooding has the ability not only to change the landscape of a pasture, but also the species composition. A long cool wet spring may encourage luxuriant growth of alfalfa, increase yields, and delay flowering. The combination of livestock in contact with higher volumes of alfalfa in a lush pre-flowering stage results in greater bloat risk and monitoring for bloat may have to be extended. Traditional water sources will change, particularly with increased volumes of surface water available for consumption. Drawing cattle to a singular watering location to incorporate bloat control products is often ineffective under such conditions. Flooded areas of a pasture can also result in unproductive, drowned out acres forcing the livestock into other areas of the pasture. Again, this may introduce a higher bloat risk unless a "release valve" grazing location is incorporated nearby. Producers have to manage each grazing parcel as unique as the livestock themselves, and alfalfa contribution to grazing acres needs to be more diligently assessed. Bloat mitigation measures should include pasture rotations and emphasize adequate dietary fibre levels consumed by mixing alfalfa and grasses in the pasture stand, intensively grazing alfalfa so the entire plant is consumed, and in more risky situations, providing access to hay on pasture.

Another nutritional concern for producers when livestock are grazing during wet conditions is mineral supplementation. Theoretically one could envision that water logged plants may be diluted in mineral content. Loose mineral supplements that are offered may also be washed away with repeated rains and blocks/tubs/licks also are not without their management challenges. Given the importance of macro and trace minerals to the health and nutritional wellbeing of livestock, common wisdom suggests that adequate access to and intake of minerals is a must. Simple

monitoring programs for mineral intake can go a long way in ensuring that proper levels are being consumed. Often, many important health and production issues such as calf performance and cow condition can be maintained or improved with proper mineral intake. Given the vast variety of programs and forms of minerals currently on the market, producers may be interested to know that several research studies are underway in Saskatchewan looking at copper and trace mineral bolusing of livestock. It is hoped that this information will give producers another option to consider in their trace mineral programs. Imagine not having to be as concerned about free choice mineral intake when pastures are excessively wet or flooded, letting a bolus take care of most of the work!

Ironically, excessive moisture can also impact water sources for livestock on pasture. Flooding of wells and surface water will alter water quality. This alteration can either be positive by flushing and reducing levels of sulfates or nitrates or may be negative by introduction of coliforms, or increases in levels of sulfates, nitrates and phosphates. Water testing is important, particularly for changing levels of Total Dissolved Solids (TDS), sulfates, nitrates and other water constituents. Not to mention the added bonus of extra nutrients creating a nutrient rich environment ripe for the formation of blue-green algal blooms when conditions are appropriate.

And finally - while frothy bloat from alfalfa is commonly thought of as a spring grazing problem, or a vegetative and frozen alfalfa conundrum, weather conditions resulting in flooding and extreme moisture may alter the course of alfalfa maturity and development along with other nutritional problems. Producers may have to be patient and pay more attention to potential problem areas for longer than normal periods all while trying to meet the grazing needs of their stock. Even now in mid July, at a time when grazing alfalfa should be at a reduced risk, frothy alfalfa bloats are still being reported. Even now, mineral consumption and watering sources need to be monitored. Due diligence and a stepped-up awareness of pasture condition is necessary to ensure a safe and healthy grazing season.

Low Hay Acres, High Hay Prices

Hold on to your hats. The most recent USDA estimate for hay acreage to be harvested in the U.S. during 2011 has likely set the stage for a wild, upward ride in hay prices for the rest of the year.

For more on this article from the July 5, 2011 issue of *eHay Weekly*, click here.

When Forage Plants like it Salty

Nadia Mori, PAg
Regional Forage Specialist, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

Saline soils are a common issue across Saskatchewan. Whether it is that white spot where nothing grows, an area with white streaks or simply a patch with poor plant growth, salinity is often easy to detect. The main reason most plants are not able to grow in salt affected areas is that even though enough nutrients and water may be available in the soil, the salts prevent the water and nutrients from entering the plant. The stronger the salinity of your soil, the fewer plant species will be able to cope with and grow in this environment.

You may be wondering why soils turn saline in the first place. Salinity is in fact more of a water problem than a soil problem. Salts are part of many of the parent materials of Saskatchewan soils yet the salts generally only become a problem when the water table is too close to the soil surface. If the water table is close enough to the surface, evaporation can carry the ground water to the surface where the salt particles will be deposited. Salt accumulates where the quantity of water leaving the soil surface by evaporation exceeds the quantity of water that enters the soil through rainfall, runoff accumulation or irrigation. The three most common conditions leading to salinization of an area include: water discharge from an aquifer, evaporation rings around sloughs, and side hill seeps. Water management is therefore the most important part in management of saline affected areas.

Western Wheatgrass
Photo Credit: L Thompson

Perennial forages help control salinity by lowering the existing groundwater table, which prevents further accumulation of salts at the surface and stabilizes the water table over the long-term. The selected species usually require some degree of flood tolerance as saline areas are often temporarily saturated in spring. In saline areas it is also recommended to seed a mixture of grasses and legumes because the level of salinity often varies throughout the area and over time. Seed mixtures designed to cope with a wide range of salinity are suggested in order to establish and maintain a productive forage stand across an entire saline site. Tall wheatgrass, slender wheatgrass, northern wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, Russian wildrye grass and Altai wildrye grass are some of the grass species you may consider. Legumes such as alfalfa are high water use crops and will establish in the areas of low salinity, thereby reducing the high moisture levels often associated with these sites and increase the quality of the forage. Please refer to the Saskatchewan Forage Crop Production guide available at the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture website (www.agr.gov.sk.ca) or contact your local Regional Forage Specialist for a detailed list of available forage species and their specific tolerance to salinity and flooding.

Late-fall seeding is recommended for saline areas. Early spring snowmelt temporarily decreases soil salinity concentrations which gives the emerging seedling a better chance to establish. Proper vegetation management will help you reduce the severity of your salinity issue and limit further spread.

For more information please contact the Agriculture Knowledge Centre (Toll-free 1-866-457-2377) or your Ministry of Agriculture Regional Forage Specialist.

Ducks Unlimited Canada Provides Forage Opportunities for Farmers

To help alleviate forage shortages as a result of flooding and poor growing conditions in many parts of Saskatchewan, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) is offering haying and grazing lands to producers.

"We understand that many farmers all across the province are facing forage shortages this year and Ducks Unlimited Canada wants to do what we can to help out." says Brent Kennedy, manager of provincial operations in Saskatchewan for DUC. "We've made similar offers during times of drought, and we know from those experiences that in a time of need access to additional grazing or haying lands can make a difference for livestock producers."

Each year DUC offers approximately 20,000 acres for haying and grazing management. This year, DUC will be increasing this amount to 48,000 acres due to the forage shortage many producers are now facing. Much of the pastureland offered by DUC was tendered in early June with a new tender involving 17,000 acres of mostly hayland being offered in early July.

Information about the DUC Forage Tender and tender packages are available online at yourland.ducks.ca or by emailing foragesk@ducks.ca . Interested producers can also contact their local DUC office for more information about this program.

"As landowners and partners in the community, we want to work with producers to help them find solutions to get through this difficult time." says Kennedy. DUC delivers several agricultural conservation programs in Saskatchewan and all revenues generated from the tendering of these lands are reinvested into the programs in the province.

Round Bale Silage can be a Useful Option when Weather is not Conducive to Haying

The July 8, 2011 issue of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture's *Crop Production News (CPN)* featured an article by Michel Tremblay, PAg, Provincial Forage Specialist, on the topic of round bale silage. Click here to access the complete CPN publication including a number of articles related to crop production and pest management.

Hay is the most cost-effective form in which to harvest and store forage, as it has relatively modest requirements for machinery and management. Saskatchewan's usually sunny, warm summers have made hay the main method of storing long fibre forage in the province. Successful haying requires drying the forage from a moisture level of 75 per cent at cutting to below 20 per cent moisture at time of baling. This will ensure safe storage using commonly available baling equipment. The drying rate of cut forage is related to relative humidity and temperature, as well as how much rain occurs between cutting and baling. When conditions are not conducive to rapid dry down of cut forage, the making of bale silage or "haylage" can speed the feed storage process and help reduce dry matter losses due to inclement weather and poor drying conditions. Read more….

Alfalfa Weevils Active in North Dakota

From the July 5, 2011 issue of *eHay Weekly*

Heavy alfalfa weevil damage has been observed in swaths in several counties in

North Dakota, reports Janet Knodel, entomologist with North Dakota State University Extension. Typically, Knodel says, alfalfa weevil damage is controlled by cutting hay early, when 30% of plants show feeding damage and larvae are still present. "After cutting, fields should be inspected carefully for signs of damage or delayed regrowth, particularly in the swath area where larvae may be concentrated."

Treat if 50% of the crowns have weevil feeding and regrowth is delayed three to six days, she recommends. "Feeding injury is often concentrated underneath the windrows. To sample, inspect 20 crowns from each of five sites in the field, recording the percent of damaged plants."

A list of insecticides registered for alfalfa weevil control is available in the *North Dakota Field Crop Insect Management Guide 2011*.

Saskatchewan Hay Market Report

Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture
www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/FeedForageListing

As listed Thursday, July 14, 2011

	Listings	Listings Priced	Tons Listed	Tons Priced	Lowest Price/ton	Highest Price/ton	Weighted Average Price/ton
Alfalfa	4	2	918	918	$33	50	$36
Brome/ Alf	9	9	3,238	3,238	$35	$57	$46
Organic Alfalfa	0	-	-	-	-	-	-

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 webpage.

Wyoming, Western Nebraska, and Western South Dakota
Weekly Hay Summary (Week ending July 9, 2011)
Dennis Widga, Torrington, WY
www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/to_gr310.txt
Trade and movement fairly active. Demand very good with very good buying inquiry in all areas. Hay prices firm. Very good interest has been noted from out-of-state hay buyers. Warmer temperatures this week helped hay production as most first cutting is completed in eastern Wyoming and western Nebraska, but just starting in other areas. Most old crop hay has been sold.

Weekly Montana Hay Report (Week ending July 9, 2011)
Justin Lumpkin, Billings, MT
www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/bl_gr310.txt

Compared to last week: Hay price trend not applicable due to very limited sales reported, however a higher undertone was noted on some limited new crop trade. Prices listed reflect old crop offerings. Trade activity is mostly inactive to very light due to the limited available inventories throughout the state. Demand good to very good with majority of inquiries continue to come from out of state buyers. Producers continue working in the hay meadows this week actively laying down forage and allowing it to dry for baling. Comments on yields and tonnage have been somewhat mixed throughout the state due to growing days, moisture and temperatures.

Prices are for the week ending July 9, 2011

	Eastern Wyoming	Central & Western Wyoming	Western South Dakota	Montana
Alfalfa				
Supreme	$190.00-205.00	-	-	-
Premium	$150.00-180.00	$170.00	$100.00	$100.00-140.00*
Good	-	$130.00-150.00	$90.00	$65.00-75.00 (old) $85.00-100.00 (new)
Fair -Good	$130.00-150.00	-	-	$45.00-60.00
Mixed Grass	-	-	-	
Grass	-	-	$70.00	$40.00-65.00
Alfalfa/Grass	-	$100.00	$60.00-100.00-	-
Greenfeed	$60.00	-	-	-

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

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