The Saskatchewan Hay and Pasture Report

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Note from the Saskatchewan Forage Council

Welcome to the Saskatchewan Forage Council's *Saskatchewan Hay and Pasture Report*. As usual, we are pleased to bring you timely updates and production information for another forage growing season. In this first issue of 2010 we present articles on the forage crop outlook for 2010, information on cost-sharing programs that can benefit forage and livestock producers, grazing management strategies, and facts about grass hoppers. 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. You may also want to visit our website www.saskforage.ca for regular news and information related to the forage industry.

Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture Crop Report
Weeks ending May 24 and May 31, 2010

Southeastern Saskatchewan:
Week ending May 24
The region reported an average of 35 mm of rain, with all areas recording moisture. The Stoughton area received 36 mm, the Grenfell area 40 mm, the Griffin area 46 mm, the Moose Jaw area 68 mm and the Ceylon area 75 mm. Most areas received more than 25 mm of rain. On hay land and pasture, topsoil moisture is rated as 20 per cent surplus and 80 per cent adequate. Pasture conditions have improved since last month and are rated as 41 per cent excellent, 54 per cent good and five per cent fair. The region has a good supply of livestock water, with 96 per cent of livestock producers indicating an adequate supply and four per cent indicating an inadequate supply.

Week ending May 31

The region reported receiving an average of 38 mm of rain. The Gainsborough area received 78 mm, the Moosomin area 75 mm, the Weyburn area 52 mm, Indian Head area 41 mm and the Radville and Ceylon areas 52 mm. Most areas received more than 30 mm of rain during the week. Since April 1, many areas have reported receiving well over 100 mm of rain, while other areas received over 175 mm. On hay land and pasture, topsoil moisture is rated as 19 per cent surplus and 81 per cent adequate. Creeks are running higher now than during spring snow melt. Hay land and pasture is in good condition.

Southwestern Saskatchewan:

Week ending May 24

An average of 34 mm of rain fell on the region throughout the week. The Big Beaver area received 77 mm, the Spring Valley and Shaunavon areas 51 mm, the Rush Lake area 49 mm and the Maple Creek area received between 46 and 67 mm. Snow was reported in the Gull Lake, Maple Creek and Consul areas. Hay land and pasture topsoil moisture conditions are 11 per cent surplus, 86 per cent adequate and three per cent short. Pasture conditions going into June are rated as 39 per cent excellent, 57 per cent good and four per cent fair. The region has a good supply of livestock water, with 95 per cent of livestock producers indicating an adequate supply and five per cent indicating an inadequate supply.

Week ending May 31

The region received an average of 34 mm of rain. The Lisieux area received 51 mm, Spring Valley area 52 mm, Mankota area 47 mm, Rush Lake area 58 mm, Eastend 48 mm and the Maple Creek area 35 mm. Most areas recorded more than 30 mm of precipitation for the week. Hay land and pasture topsoil moisture conditions are nine per cent surplus, 87 per cent adequate and four per cent short. Hay land and pasture are in good condition.

East Central Saskatchewan:

Week ending May 24

The region recorded an average of 33 mm. The Neudorf area recorded 32 mm, the Elfros area 39 mm and the Kenaston area 71 mm. Hay land and pasture topsoil moisture is rated as 41 per cent surplus and 59 per cent adequate. Pasture conditions are rated as 36 per cent excellent, 53 per cent good and 11 per cent fair. One hundred per cent of livestock producers are indicating they have an adequate supply for their animals.

Week ending May 31

The region received an average of 37 mm during the week. The Langenburg area recorded 59 mm, the Rama area 62 mm and the Bradwell area 57 mm. Since April 1, the region has received between 109 to 260 mm of rain. Hay land and pasture topsoil moisture is rated as 56 per cent surplus and 44 per cent adequate.

West Central Saskatchewan:

Week ending May 24

The region averaged 46 mm of rain during the week. The Outlook area recorded 89 mm, the Biggar area 61 mm and the Sonningdale area 70 mm. Most areas reported in excess of 35 mm of moisture for the week. Pasture and hay land topsoil moisture conditions are rated as 21 per cent surplus, 78 per cent adequate and one per cent short. Pasture conditions have significantly improved since last month, and are rated as 48 per cent excellent, 47 per cent good

and five per cent fair. The region is reporting 80 per cent of livestock producers have an adequate supply of water for their animals, while 20 per cent are indicating an inadequate supply. Dugouts are low in the Kindersley area, but the recent rain has helped to increase the water levels.

Week ending May 31

The region received an average of 45 mm of rain during the week. The Arelee area recorded 73 mm, the Rosetown and Harris areas 54 mm and the Sonningdale area 76 mm. Most areas reported receiving more than 35 mm of moisture for the week. Since April 1, the region has received between 100 to 255 mm of rain. Pasture and hay land topsoil moisture conditions are rated as 32 per cent surplus, 67 per cent adequate and one per cent short.

Northeastern Saskatchewan:

Week ending May 24

The region received an average of 31 mm. The Nipawin area received 33 mm, the Vonda area 47 mm and the Garrick area 36 mm. Most areas recorded in excess of 20 mm of rain during the week. Hay land and pasture topsoil moisture is rated as 44 per cent surplus and 56 per cent adequate. Pasture conditions are rated as 43 per cent excellent, 47 per cent good and 10 per cent fair. One hundred per cent of livestock producers have an adequate supply of water for their animals.

Week ending May 31

The region received on average 49 mm of rain. The Tisdale area received 62 mm, the Melfort area 64 mm, the Vonda area 56 mm and the Garrick area 133 mm. Since April 1, the region has received between 108 to 246 mm of rain. Hay land and pasture topsoil moisture is rated as 79 per cent surplus and 21 per cent adequate.

Northwestern Saskatchewan:

Week ending May 24

The region received an average of 44 mm. The Medstead area received 62 mm, the North Battleford area 75 mm and the Meadow Lake area 60 mm. Pasture and hay land conditions are six per cent surplus, 91 per cent adequate and three per cent short. Pasture conditions have significantly improved since last month, and are rated as 20 per cent excellent, 53 per cent good, 25 per cent fair and two per cent poor. Ninety-three per cent of livestock producers have an adequate supply of water for their animals, while seven per cent are indicating a shortage. Pastures and hay land are responding to the moisture.

Week ending May 31

The region received an average of 47 mm of rain. The Hafford area received 74 mm, the Speers area 44 mm, the North Battleford area 69 mm and the Dorintosh area 30 mm. Since April 1, the region has received between 134 to 248 mm of rain. Pasture and hay land conditions are six per cent surplus and 94 per cent adequate. Frost damage is showing up on some of the alfalfa crops. The hay crop and pastures are looking promising. Some heat and sun would be good for everything.

2010 Forage Outlook
Compiled by the Saskatchewan Forage Council

As we look ahead and attempt to predict what this year will bring for forage production and markets, as with any production year, the determining factors remain weather, current feed supplies, and livestock market trends.

The major factor dictating forage production in a given season is the weather and it, of course, is the most difficult to predict. Going into the fall of 2009, many areas in the province were extremely dry. The winter saw an average accumulation of snow, but this was not sufficient in replenishing the depleted moisture levels in many areas. The good news is that most of these areas have received the record spring precipitation (click the link to view AAFC precipitation map) that the majority of the province has been experiencing. These spring rains have recharged moisture levels, giving hay and pasture land an excellent start. Some areas that are not accustomed to it may be looking at second cuts if the moisture continues and temperatures warm up. However, experience warns us that much is yet to be determined as hay quality could be compromised if the moisture trend continues into the haying season. Temperatures have been relatively cool to date and warmer temperatures are needed to advance hay and pastures.


Photo Credit: Reg and Shannon Schellenberg
Perrin Ranching 1990, Ltd.

Forage market trends, both hay and grazing, directly correlate with feed inventories. Hay yields in Saskatchewan last year were moderate to poor due to the widespread lack of moisture, and this reduced production failed to replenish the already depleted carryover feed supply from 2008. Supplies were further reduced due to the relatively cold winter and the cool spring, resulting in delayed cattle turn-out and extension of the feeding period for many. Drought conditions experienced in 2009 also resulted in below average pasture production. Above average precipitation experienced to date in 2010 will go a long way towards improving pasture conditions and creating the potential for above average hay yields. As spring moisture has delayed seeding in many areas, producers may be looking at greenfeed as an alternate seeding option which will also add to feed inventories. With early conditions favorable for above average forage production and improved pasture health, this season's production has the potential to replenish depleted supplies and increase overall inventories which in turn will place downward pressure on hay prices.

The livestock industry, with the cattle herd the largest end-user, directly influences forage demand. Long-term negative market influences continue to impact cattle producers' overall profitability. Although the rate of decline of the Canadian cow herd appears to have slowed, further reductions have occurred. From January 1, 2009 to January 1, 2010 the number of beef

cows in Canada decreased from 4.65 million head to 4.47 million head, a reduction of four per cent. In Saskatchewan during the same time period, beef cow numbers dropped to 1.38 million head from 1.39 million head the year previous, a mere one per cent reduction. Although the 2009 fall calf market remained below profitable levels, cattle prices have improved throughout the spring of 2010. The last week of May, 500-600 pound feeder steers averaged $119/cwt, similar to the same week in 2009. During the same period, D1/D2 cow prices ranged from $47 – 65.50/cwt, hitting $5/cwt higher than prices in May 2009. Cow/calf pairs averaged $1165 at the end of May, compared to $1058 per pair in May 2009. While cattle prices remain lower than desired, positive market undertones have become prevalent resulting in overall optimism for long-term upward trends in the cattle markets. The further reduction in cow numbers will decrease the demand for hay placing less pressure on hay prices, as well as making more land readily available for grazing.

In general, 2010 appears to be a year of potential. With moisture levels replenished and conditions for above average forage production, opportunities exist to rebuild supplies, improve pasture heath through well-planned grazing management strategies and supply the livestock industry's demand for quality, cost-effective feed sources. However, stay tuned as the 2010 story has just begun to be written - weather will always have the final say.

Environmental Funding Programs Continue for Producers
Shelanne Wiles Longley, Provincial Council of ADD Boards

Last April, the provincial government announced the continuation of the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program (CSFSP) - a program aimed at assisting producers address and mitigate on-farm environmental risk through the cost-shared adoption of Beneficial Management Practices.

Eligibility for this program remains the same – completion of an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) or participation within an Agri-Environmental Group Plan (AEGP). Producers who fall within this are eligible to apply for cost-shares of 30-75% on various projects to a maximum of $50,000 per operation. The Provincial Council of ADD Boards who has delivered the Environmental Farm Plan since its inception in 2005 was designated as the delivery agent for the Farm Stewardship Program in 2009.

Over 11, 000 producers have completed an Environmental Farm Plan, and although participation in the EFP program has dropped off considerably, demand remains. Workshops are consistently being scheduled throughout the province where producers are provided the opportunity to self-assess their agriculture operations for environmental risk and develop an action plan to address that risk. Parallel to the EFP is the Agri-Environmental Group Plans– an initiative aimed at focusing awareness and resources towards agriculture's impact on water quality. Participating in an AEGP provides the connection of producers to technical support


Photo Credit: PCAB

allowing them to pinpoint a major issue in their watershed and identify BMP's to help address that issue. Regardless of which avenue a producer wishes to explore, participation in either the EFP or AEGP programs is mandatory to apply for funding through the Farm Stewardship Program.

For many producers, the completion of their EFP is approaching five years. PCAB is currently in the development process of creating a re-assessment process for producers who have completed their EFP in 2005. This will provide producers an opportunity to re-visit their plans and assess what they have completed, what they have not completed and identify priority environmental areas they would like to address in the future. It is anticipated that the first reassessment workshop will be rolled out this fall and it will be required for producers to reassess once their plan reaches five years.

Uptake of the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program has been remarkable over the last year. Almost 3000 applications have been approved adding up to over 10 million dollars being allocated to projects on the landscape. A few changes have been made to the BMP list this year. One example is the change in BMP # 1601 – Shelterbelt Establishment where the payout has increased from $200/mile to $1200/mile paid to a maximum of 50%. Another example is the increased rate for native forage establishment – to encourage the uptake of seeding native perennial cover, the rate has been increased from $65/acre to $110/acre.

PCAB's program reps and advisors are available to assist in identifying and implementing BMP's, connect producers to the appropriate technical resources necessary, and to help with the completion of their EFP. For further information on the BMP list, the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program, and the Environmental Farm Plan/Agri-Environmental Group Plans please contact your local rep or advisor by visiting www.saskpcab.com or calling toll-free 1-866-298-7222.

Productivity of Forage Species is Impacted by the Date Grazing Begins

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

By all accounts, winter is a long season in Saskatchewan, and not just for humans. Livestock must contend with long periods of cold weather, consuming stored feed that is usually less palatable than what grows in the pasture during the summer. As spring - and the growing season - approaches, it is a common sight to see cattle pacing fence lines and straining to reach any new growth on the other side. That, and the pressure of getting on to other important spring work around the farm, can result in stock being turned out when the forage is not ready to be grazed. Grazing prior to range readiness results in reduced total annual forage production, reduced plant vigour, and reduced animal performance.

Range readiness can be defined as *the point at which soil and plant conditions on a seasonal pasture have progressed to a point where they can be safely grazed without damaging the soil or desirable plants*, and represents the earliest date at which livestock turnout should occur.

The calendar date when range readiness occurs can be expected to differ from year to year because it depends on growing conditions, such as available moisture and growing degree days received. Temperature is the main factor influencing the growth rate of plants and growing

degree days measure the accumulation of the duration of temperatures which are conducive to plant development. Primary forage species will also have a large impact on when range readiness occurs.

In Saskatchewan, key introduced forage species such as crested wheatgrass, Russian wildrye grass, and meadow bromegrass are often used for early grazing. In areas that predominantly use native rangeland for grazing, rotation systems may be used to provide season-long grazing. Different species of grass may vary in the stage of development that indicates range readiness. Crested wheatgrass can be considered at a stage of range readiness at the three leaf stage, often coinciding with approximately six inches of growth. Meadow bromegrass can be considered to be ready at the 3.5 leaf stage.

Different forage species arrive at the target developmental stage at different rates. For instance, crested wheatgrass will be at the 3.5 leaf stage after approximately 516 growing degree days, while needle-and-thread, a common key forage species in southern Saskatchewan rangelands, requires 1014 growing degree days to reach the same developmental stage. Therefore, crested wheatgrass will be at a stage of range readiness considerably sooner than needle-and-thread.

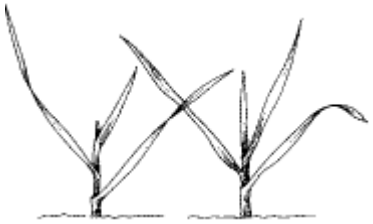

Figure 4: Grass plant at the 3 leaf stage (left) and 3.5 leaf stage (right).

Source: Frank, Sedivec and Hoffman, NDSU, 1993.

Although pastures can be grazed prior to the onset of range readiness, the rest period following defoliation will likely be longer, and total forage production may be reduced. Adopting the concept of range readiness has many potential benefits for the land manager. The initiation of grazing when range readiness is achieved on a given pasture will result in increased animal gains through increased feed intake and efficiency, enhanced plant vigour, and total forage production will be maintained.

This article has been reprinted with permission from the May 13, 2010 issue of the Crop Production News published by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture.

Cows, Birds and Hoppers

Peggy Strankman
Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Manager, Environmental Affairs

Each year on the first Saturday of May, Canada celebrates International Migratory Bird Day. Created in 1993, it helps focus attention on a remarkable event, the amazing migration of 90 per cent of Canada's birds back from the southern United States, Mexico and Central America. Unfortunately many of those bird populations are in decline. The reasons are varied and sometimes uncertain but for sure an abundant food supply is a good thing. For many of the grassland birds that means grasshoppers. However in agriculture extraordinarily high numbers of grasshoppers can mean crop damage.

Fortunately believing that every insect has its place, and ecological role, Dr. Dan Johnson, University of Lethbridge, wrote a book on how to identify grasshoppers on the Canadian prairies. "Grasshopper Identification & Control Methods" was conceptualized by the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers and funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. It includes

photographs of the most common 25 species, and explains how to tell pest from regular run of the mill type.

Johnson says, “The first rule is any grasshopper flying before June is not a pest. Second rule is that crop pest grasshoppers hatch in late May and early June, are brown or black and always have tiny triangular wing buds, not large wings that can be folded back when examined closely. Third rule - any hopper with hind wings highly visible in flight (red, yellow, orange or black) is not a pest. Fourth rule – any grasshopper that sings, calls, clacks, clatters or makes other similar sounds is not a pest. The pest species are silent.”


Photo Credit: Dr. Dan Johnson

The book is an easy read, starting with how to recognize grasshopper ages and stages. There are great photographs of pest species like the two-striped grasshopper and the neutral or beneficial species. It can be found on line at **http://www.saskpulse.com/news/latest_pulse_news.php?detail=182** or http://research.uleth.ca/spg/ under “Grasshopper Guide”.

“Reducing the cost of pest management can only be a good thing,” says Lynn Grant, Chair of the Environment Committee for the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association (CCA). The other major benefit is that being very selective in taking out only the grasshoppers that are a serious problem also protects the food supply for the prairie grassland song birds,“ says Grant.

CCA is in discussions with Dr. Johnson and AAFC to prepare a sequel that will focus on the range and pasture land species that will be of more interest to grass and forage managers.

Growing Forward - Farm Business Development Initiative (FBDI)
Jennifer Mouly, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

The Growing Forward Farm Business Development Initiative will assist farmers to adopt progressive farm business management practices and strategies in nine business management areas – business strategies, marketing, production economics, human resources, financial management, succession planning, business structure, risk management and environmental strategy. The program will provide up to $4,000 to qualified farmers to access farm related training and consulting services. Producers must complete the Taking Stock needs assessment document and create a Farm Development Plan in order to access these benefits.

To get started in this program:

Contact your local Regional Service Office at the phone number provided below.

Obtain a Taking Stock booklet from your Regional Service Office.

Complete the Taking Stock needs assessment service on your own, with the assistance of your Regional Farm Business Management Specialist or by attending a Taking Stock workshop in your area.

Arrange an appointment with your local Ministry of Agriculture Regional Farm Business Management Specialist to develop a Farm Development Plan (based on the results of Taking Stock). The Specialist will help you determine what information, training and consulting services are available to complete your Farm Development Plan.

Complete an Application for Funding and submit it for approval.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit Saskatchewan Agriculture's website at www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca or contact your local Regional Service Office at:

Moose Jaw 1-866-457-2377
North Battleford (306) 446-7964
Outlook (306) 867-5575
Prince Albert (306) 953-2363
Kindersley (306) 463-5513
Watrous (306) 946-3220
Swift Current (306) 778-8218
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Weyburn (306) 848-2857
Yorkton (306) 786-1531

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Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

Growing Forward

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

Baled Forage Prices (dollars per metric Ton) to June 3, 2010

	Listings	Listings Priced	Tons Listed	Tons Priced	Lowest Price/ton	Highest Price/ton	Weighted Average Price/ton
Alfalfa	3	2	162	162	$73	$100	$96
Brome/ Alfalfa	3	2	168	168	$27	$100	$75
Straw	2	2	270	270	$25	$33	$32
Other	1	1	190	190	$55	$55	$55
Wild Hay	1	1	68	68	$67	$67	$67

USDA Market News Service Hay Reports
USDA Market News Service

Wyoming, Western Nebraska, and Western South Dakota Weekly Hay Summary
(week ending June 5, 2010)
Dennis Widga, Torrington, WY
www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/to_gr310.txt

Trade and movement slow. Hay prices mostly steady. Some first cutting on the ground in eastern Wyoming. Mustard weed reported to be a problem in some areas. Demand moderate to good for dairy quality hay, moderate to light for cow hay. Some contracting of new crop hay being reported. Supplies remain good and it appears there will be some carry over this spring. All prices dollars per ton FOB stack in medium to large square bales and rounds, unless otherwise noted. Horse hay in small squares. Prices are from the most recent reported sales.

Weekly Montana Hay Report
(week ending June 5, 2010)
James M. Ward, Billings, MT
www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/bl_gr310.txt

Hay prices steady with very limited current sales. Trade activity mostly light to inactive with light demand and buyers inquiry. Area forage growth continues to progress as warmer temperature and light to moderate amounts of moisture provide adequate growth environment. Irrigation water issues continue to be discussed at the coffee table, however majority see ample supply throughout the season. All sales FOB the stack and per ton basis in large rounds or large square bales, unless otherwise stated.

	Eastern Wyoming	Central & Western Wyoming	Western South Dakota	Montana
Alfalfa				
Supreme	-	-	-	-
Premium	-	-	-	$85.00-95.00
Good	$70.00-90.00	$80.00-90.00	$65.00-85.00	$75.00-85.00
Fair -Good	$55.00-75.00	$60.00-80.00	$45.00-65.00	$55.00-75.00
Mixed Grass	-	-	-	-
Grass	-	-	$55.00	-
Straw	$50.00	-	$40.00	-
Alfalfa/Grass	-	$70.00-90.00	$70.00-85.00	$75.00-85.00

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

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