

# The Saskatchewan Hay and Pasture Report

Volume 11 Number 4

Saskatchewan Forage Council

October 15, 2010

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## **Note from the Saskatchewan Forage Council**

Fall is officially here and with it appeared the summer weather that we were waiting for. The end of the 2010 growing season brings us the harvest rush, the fall calf run, winter feed stockpiling, the return home of the cow herd, and the fourth and final edition of the *Saskatchewan Hay and Pasture Report* for the year. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who contributed articles and information for our 2010 *Reports* – your input is appreciated!

As always, feedback is more than welcome. We encourage anyone interested in being placed on our email distribution list to contact the SFC at [office@saskforage.ca](mailto:office@saskforage.ca) or 306-966-2148. You may also want to visit our website ([www.saskforage.ca](http://www.saskforage.ca)) for ongoing news and information related to the forage industry.

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## **Saskatchewan Regional Forage Reports**

### **South East Saskatchewan**

*Lorne Klein – Regional Forage Specialist, Weyburn, SK  
Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture*

The south east experienced a very wet season. The excess moisture resulted in well above average hay crop yields, as much as 200% of normal. Many producers have two to three years of feed supply. The wet conditions did provide difficulties with cutting and baling of hay. Quality was compromised for many due to summer precipitation. At least half of the hay that is baled was rained on once or more while in the swath. Approximately 5% of the area hay crops were unable to be cut due to excessive moisture or flooding. There has been excellent second growth of hay crops and this will provide additional fall grazing, as well as perfect snow trapping conditions for this winter. Due to the above average forage yields, hay prices in the region have dropped significantly from last year.

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Pasture conditions thrived under the wet conditions and many producers will be able to graze longer into the fall. Moisture levels will benefit pasture growth next spring.

### **South Central Saskatchewan**

*Andre Bonneau – Regional Forage Specialist, Moose Jaw, SK  
Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture*

In the south central region yields were significantly higher than average, at times nearly triple the average. The quality however wasn't as good as many would have hoped. Hay cut in late June seemed to come off very nice but much of the hay cut after July 1 was rained on. Hay cut later into August became quite mature and coarse.

Pastures responded very well to the rains and most stayed green all summer long. There are many stockpiling forage opportunities in the south-central area. Surface water sources such as dugouts and dams have been replenished and are in good shape going into the winter. There were very few water quality concerns this summer.

### **South West Saskatchewan**

*Trevor Lennox – Regional Forage Specialist, Swift Current, SK  
Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture*

The 2010 growing season in southwest Saskatchewan will be one to remember for many years. Many producers will remember it as the year they produced their largest forage crop ever in terms of tons per acre. However, they will also remember it as the most difficult year to put up quality bales due to the high amount of rainfall through the haying season. Many producers had an extremely stretched out haying season, extending from early July through to September.

Producers are reporting hay yields near double the long-term average for the region, which will help many producers build up their winter feed supply. Due to the large amount of hay produced in the area, hay prices are considerably lower than normal in the region. There are reports of hay selling this fall in the \$40 - \$60 per ton range.



*Hay Bales in the Field 2010  
Photo Credit: Coy Schellenberg and  
Perrin Ranching 1990, Ltd.*

It was an excellent year for pastures, with tame forage species such as crested wheatgrass staying green right through the summer grazing season. Most pastures will be going into winter in excellent shape with lots of carry-over litter on them. Provided we have an open fall with little snowfall, many producers will be able to extend their grazing season due to the amount of feed remaining out on pastures.

The area within the southwest region most affected by the wet weather this summer was the Maple Creek/Cypress Hills area where they experienced some flooding of forage crops due to the high amount of rainfall.

### **West Central Saskatchewan**

*John Hauer – Regional Forage Specialist, Kindersley, SK  
Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture*

The growing conditions in the west central region were cool and wet for most of the growing season. Kindersley and area for the most part, missed the excessive rainfall amounts that other



*Straw Bales  
Photo Credit: Leanne Thompson*

parts of the province received but still received much higher than average rainfall. Hay and pasture production has been very good. Hay yields are estimated as high as 2 to 2 ½ tons/acre. Pasture production also was very good with some cattle herds having trouble keeping up with forage growth. A lot of pastures which were heavily grazed in the 2009 season have had a chance to recover this season.

With the cool wet weather and high humidity levels this past season, putting up good quality hay has been a real challenge. Hay which has been baled ranges in quality from good to very poor.

Many of the annual cereal crops in the region are very late. On September 16 and 17, the Kindersley area received a killing frost. Some of these late seeded, frost damaged, cereal crops may now be salvaged as greenfeed.

### **North East Saskatchewan**

*Al Foster – Regional Forage Specialist, Tisdale, SK  
Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture*

The growing season in northeast Saskatchewan this year can be summed up in one word – wet. Rains throughout the growing season supported good forage production but made it difficult to put up hay. Pasture growth was very good. Most pasture will enter winter with the most carryover they have had in a number of years.

Most producers started haying in late July taking advantage of two weeks of good weather. As a result of this later than normal harvest and rains throughout most of the summer, hay quality will be quite variable across the region. Alfalfa fields grew back well and second cuts were being taken in mid to late September. A few producers had difficulty harvesting hay because soils were too wet for machinery.

Most green feed crops were seeded late and were swathed in mid to late September. Frosts in mid September had many concerned with nitrates in green feed crops. Cereal straw will be in short supply in some areas and producers will need to travel farther to meet their needs.

Asking prices for hay are estimated at about \$50-\$60 per ton for average quality alfalfa/brome hay. Hay supplies throughout the region are good. Most producers will have some surplus hay this year although some producers will not be able to harvest some of their hay fields and will need to purchase feed. A few producers that rely on meadow hay as part of their hay supplies needed to access alternate sources of feed.

### **North Central Saskatchewan**

*Donald Perrault – Regional Forage Specialist, Prince Albert, SK  
Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture*

This year growing conditions for pastures and hay land have been excellent with above average yields across the north central region. Higher than normal rainfall and unpredictable weather throughout July and August created difficult conditions for putting up quality hay. This was especially true across the north and east side of the region. As a result, there is a wide variability in quality of hay that was placed in storage for the winter months. As of October 1, some producers are still working to complete late cuttings of hay and baling of annual crops for greenfeed. In spite of the difficult conditions, most producers have been able to put up some of their hay in good condition. Estimates for hay quality across the region are rated at 30% - Excellent, 45 – 50% - Good, and 15 – 20% - Poor. Producers will need to watch how they feed the lower quality hays and supplement these when necessary. Due to above average yields this year, it's anticipated that hay prices may be slightly lower than last year and in the range of \$50 – 70 per ton for an alfalfa-brome hay of good quality. Some producers on the east side of the region may struggle to find adequate straw to bale on their own farms and may have to source straw from neighboring farms or other regions.

Pastures are going into the fall in good condition this year and on many farms, late fall grazing will be possible due to pasture re-growth.

### **North West Saskatchewan**

*Glenn Barclay – Regional Forage Specialist, North Battleford, SK  
Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture*

The northwest region of the province had a wet and cool growing season. Most of the area had between 15 and 20 inches of rain from the start of April to the end of September. This alleviated water supply concerns and rejuvenated growth on pastures, but the rain plagued haymakers.

The normal haying season was long and drawn out. On the majority of hay acres, rain fell on swaths and did not allow a good drying period or producers were forced to cut later than normal. Many fields were raked or flipped to enhance drying. A few producers tried hay preservatives. Some producers switched to bale silage as the wet weather continued. An estimated 5% of hay acres have been abandoned as they were too wet to bale.

It is estimated that 50% of the hay crop in the northwest is in the good to excellent quality range while 50% could be classified as fair to poor quality.

Yields were above average on most fields. If 1.4 tons per acre is considered the long term average yield, the northwest region yield in 2010 could be 50 to 75% greater than that on most hay fields. Straw supplies should be adequate in the northwest.

Greenfeed supplies are expected to be above average this year. Late September temperatures were mild and many greenfeed acres were cut after mid September frosts. Nitrate concerns are similar to other years.

Hay prices are trending downwards because of the excess hay supply in the province. Most producers have very large stocks of hay entering the winter in the northwest. Some producers have reported they have twice as much as needed. Large supplies on hand will mean very little hay will be sold locally. Hay quality will be the only marketing attribute available to try to obtain a price close to historical averages. Poor quality hay will be very difficult to market this year. Quality of feed stocks will become known as the winter feeding season starts.

Most pastures will enter the 2011 grazing season in good condition due to moisture levels this past growing season.

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### The 2010 Saskatchewan Forage Crop in Review

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

Minimal snow conditions across much of the province during winter 2009-2010, coupled with dry conditions observed in 2009 placed soil moisture conditions disconcertingly low in early spring of 2010. Many were concerned about drought and feed supplies in early spring. The infamous Saskatchewan weather, however, was not to be easily predicted by the pundits and experts. In mid-spring, it began to rain, and continued to do so across virtually the entire province through the summer. The rain was accompanied by generally below average temperatures.



*Alfalfa/Grass Bales in Field 2010  
Photo Credit: Coy Schellenberg and  
Perrin Ranching 1990, Ltd.*

Once rain began to fall, the grass began to make some headway. Even older fields looked good in 2010. In contrast to 2009, yields in all regions of Saskatchewan were the greatest in recent memory, with rainfall general, and consequently forage yields high in all areas of the province. On average, hay yields approached double that of average (**Table 1**). Re-growth was strong in all regions, and a second cut was viable even in areas where one cut is the rule. Some second cut was taken, but much was not, due to the late harvest of the first cut, rainfall, the lateness of the season, increasing feed supplies, and incursion into the fall critical period for alfalfa cutting. As feed supplies have recovered, there has been some downward pressure on prices. Prices for average quality hay have been reported in the 50-60\$ a ton range. Asking prices for good quality hay have been higher.

**Table 1. Summary of Saskatchewan hay crop yields, by region, 2010.**

Region	Estimated yield	Long-term average yield for region
Prince Albert	2.2 ton/ac	1.4 ton/ac
Tisdale	2.5 ton/ac	1.5 ton/ac
Watrous	2.0 ton/ac	1.3 ton/ac
Yorkton	2.2 ton/ac	1.5 ton/ac
Weyburn	2.5 ton/ac	1.2 ton/ac
Outlook	2.0 ton/ac	1.3 ton/ac
Kindersley	2.2 ton/ac	1.0 ton/ac
North Battleford	2.0 ton/ac	1.4 ton/ac
Swift Current	1.8 ton/ac	1.2 ton/ac
Moose Jaw	2.5 ton/ac	1.1 ton/ac

The rain and high humidity created significant problems during harvest. Producers tried to find a window to successfully put up their hay, but most of the cutting was delayed waiting for an adequate stretch of favourable weather. Some estimates indicated that 5% of the first cut was yet to be harvested as of September. The quality of the 2010 hay crop was impacted adversely by the advanced maturity of the crop when harvested, weather damage that occurred when lying in swath, and, in some cases baling at elevated moisture levels. The result was a wide array of hay quality being harvested. Initial indications of hay quality are that protein and TDN levels are low, and fibre levels are high. Feed testing and ration balancing will be of increased importance this winter.

Pasture growth mimicked hay production, with strong production, and good re-growth throughout the season. Livestock producers will likely leave stock on pasture as long as possible this fall, to take advantage of production.

Growing conditions took a marked turn early in the season in 2010, resulting in an outcome that few could have anticipated in April. The year will be remembered for the rain, high yields, the struggle with harvest, and receding forage prices.

## **Manitoba Forage Report 2010**

*Glenn Friesen – Business Development Specialist, Forages  
Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives*

### **Hay**

Much like 2009, this has been a challenging year from the start. Cool, wet conditions plagued much of Manitoba. Tame hay crop yields are generally rated above average, and quality generally below average. More recently, warm temperatures have improved hay growth and field access, which may improve harvest volumes in some areas if conditions persist. Final harvests are taking place, and some nitrate testing due to recent frosts.

**Eastern** tame hay yields were average but producers experienced challenges in harvesting between the rains. Saturated soils are still affecting field access and hay dry-down; however, moist conditions are providing for good re-growth and good third cut conditions on higher

grounds. Delayed harvests in the **southwest** resulted in tame hay yields up to 120% of normal for first cut yields, thereby delaying second cut to late September early October. Native hay harvests were well below average due poor field access. Tame yields in the **northwest** ranged from 50-90% of normal due to extremely wet conditions, especially in the eastern areas (Eddystone, etc). Overland flooding in the region has left bales standing in water and native hay stands inaccessible for the 2010 harvest – they may be grazed in early winter. Local straw production is also below average. Tame hay yields in the **Interlake** region range from normal on higher ground to 50% of normal in low lying areas, with field access still limited. Much of the tame hay has been harvested as baleage to avoid the rains. The hardest hit area in the Interlake was the southwest (Shoal Lakes) due to overland flooding. Some herds are grazing second cut hay stands or poor quality corn silage stands. Unpollinated alfalfa seed crops are also being harvested for poor quality mature hay. Tame hay yields in the **central region** are average with average to slightly below quality; but third cuts are beginning where growth warrants, with positive outlooks on quality.



*Alfalfa Snow Catch Strips, Manitoba, 2010  
Photo Credit: Glenn Friesen, MAFRI*

Low to medium quality (cow) hay is selling between \$0.028 to \$0.035/lb, and high quality (dairy) hay is selling for \$0.055 to \$0.065/lb, but prices for high quality hay are expected to rise over the feeding period. Some higher priced hay is moving into the horse industry.

Green feed yields are reported as average right from the northwest to the eastern regions. Cool, wet weather has also reduced corn silage yields in the Interlake and northwest regions; some grain fields are being harvested for silage. However, average to above average yields are recorded in the southwest and central regions.

Feed shortages are a concern in hardest hit areas. Some cattle producers continue to source straw to stretch feed supplies this winter, or plan to increase cull rates to mitigate feed shortages.

### **Pastures**

Pastures in the eastern, northwest and Interlake regions are saturated and experiencing slow re-growth. Low lying areas are damaged and will be slow to recover in 2011. Many producers in the regions are beginning to supplement on pasture. Pastures are growing better in the central and southwest regions due to slightly drier conditions. Cattle are moving to stockpiled pastures and/or drier hay fields.

## Alberta Forage Report 2010

*Grant Lastiwka – Forage, Grazing and Beef Specialist  
Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development*

All of Alberta saw a slow start to the 2010 spring forage growth. But when the moisture started to come in mid-May it has not stopped. This made hay harvest prolonged and difficult. Hay quality is averaging poor to fair with some good and little is excellent. Yield is good to excellent. Pastures recovered greatly from 2009 and are in fair to good condition with well managed ones excellent.

The exception is the Peace Region of Alberta (hardest hit is the Grimshaw-Fairview area). Here the low soil moisture levels and severe drought continued through all spring and summer. This is a three year drought with some areas experiencing now a period of 12 years with low moisture. Grasshopper damage also occurred in some areas. Fall saw some small rain events occurring at times making feed salvage difficult. Hay yields are poor but quality is excellent. Pastures are in poor to fair condition with many weed issues.



*Alfalfa/Grass Hay Crop, 2010  
Photo Credit: Coy Schellenberg and  
Perrin Ranching 1990, Ltd.*

This fall Alberta generally has excellent soil moisture reserves. The Peace region has little soil moisture reserves and surface water is short. Lower fertilizer prices allowed forage crops to be fertilized by producers with the cash flow to do it. The trend is for forage stands to be getting older. Less hay was seeded down in 2010. Pastures are getting more run down and weed encroachment is increasing. Forage establishment from 2009 seeding was spotty and often poor and most were worked down.

Forage acres continue to drop as good grain and oilseed prices compete with a slowly improving beef market. This is too little and too late for many financially stressed beef

producers. The Alberta government \$50/head payout on bred cows for poor pastures at the start of 2010 was used to cover \$150/head in losses from last year's long feeding period and high feed cost.

Forage prices of hay, are 3-4 cents/pound with greenfeed about a ½ cent less. Better hay is in the 5+ cents/pound for horse or dairy use. Excess straw across Alberta is common but use limited by trucking costs. Low quality hay is also competing with the 1½-2 cents/pound straw prices.

### **South**

In southern Alberta, there is more feed than ever. Spring soil moisture was good to excellent. In May there was a huge snowfall event in the south-west. Rain events across much of southern Alberta were constant in spring, summer and fall. In September there was still some first cut hay being taken off, as second and third cuts were also being taken. Most producers with access to irrigation did not irrigate. Qualities of timothy and alfalfa crops are not high, but the volume is



excellent. Cereal silage yields are above average. Hay yields are excellent but quality is poor to good. Pastures are good to excellent.

Alfalfa seed yields are projected to be 80% of normal. Crop disease and wet weather have not been favourable for alfalfa seed production. Due to continued rain, virtually no seed has been harvested before October.

### ***Central***

In central Alberta, for those who were patient a slow start to spring grazing was rewarded by the late April rains (central-east Alberta) and mid-May rains (central-west). Rains kept coming all spring, summer and fall. Moisture events were frequent, and above average. Low soil moisture reserves and surface water bodies were replenished.

Hay and silage yields were average or greater with quality varying from poor for early cut to good for those cut in late July. The majorities of first cut hay was taken in August and are in fair condition. It is hoped that late second growth may improve quality of this first cut. Throughout September many were still doing first cut hay operations. In October a very few are doing second cut. Pastures are growing late into the fall due to the high moisture and late frosts. Weed problems are on the rise. Grazing is expected to be extended for most into late October early November.

Hay yields at Oyen were less than 1 ton/acre for older stands and 1-1 ½ ton/acre for new stands. Hay yields in more western parts were 2-3 tons/acre.

### ***North-Central***

In the mid-north there was a slower start to moisture events, so forage crops that were older or pastures that were overgrazed gave fair to good yields. The northwest remained short of moisture through much of the summer but improved by late fall. Hay yields were above average in the east, average in the Edmonton north area and normal to excellent in the west. Pastures in the Edmonton area were fair to good and average to excellent in the west and east.

### ***Peace***

In the Peace, rainfall stopped at High Prairie west. An early spring heavy snow saved many near the BC border. But after this event, moisture did not occur until some in the later part of September. In dry areas hay crops were grazed. Cow herds are being severely culled, downsized or outright sold. A 20% drop or more of cows in the Peace is predicted. Alfalfa crops, low lying wet lands, failed grain crops, and straw are being put up as the limited winter feed supply. Grazing of canola re-growth is another alternative being used. Frost came early and hard in the High Prairie area. Near Manning grasshoppers were an issue. Hay yields varied from 0.2 ton/acre to 1¼ ton /acre.

At Fort Vermilion forage yields were good. Moisture was normal but frequent causing poor quality hay to be put up. Lots of second cut is being grazed standing or in swaths. Pastures had a good start in spring and now vary in condition from fair to excellent.

**News from the Peace Region**

*Calvin Yoder, Forage Seed Crops Agriologist  
Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development*

It's hard to imagine that with all the rainfall across Alberta and Western Canada that the Peace Region experienced one of the driest summers on record. The entire region was extremely dry with the exception of the northern areas. There was very little snow last winter and spring came very early. Seeding was well underway by the end of April. Fortunately, on the May long weekend, most of the region received rain or snow. This helped to even out emergence of annual crops. In terms of annual crop conditions it turned out to be one of the most encouraging springs in the past number of years. Unfortunately, following this weather event, the region received very little precipitation the rest of the growing season. Annual crops, and especially forage crops, deteriorated quickly. Hay yields were 25% of normal and pastures were in terrible condition.

Harvest of annual crops began early to mid-August, but as the end of August approached, harvest was interrupted by frequent showers and rain. This continued into September and was just what farmers did not need. At this point in time, (September 27) 75% of the annual crop has been harvested in the central part of region. Harvest is behind in northern and southern areas as only 40-50% is completed. Annual crop yields are well below average. This is the third year in a row that many areas of the Peace have been under extremely dry conditions.

*Following are comments on how some of the grass and legume seed crops fared in 2010 and what might be expected in 2011:*

***Creeping Red Fescue***

Another dry year was not good for creeping red fescue seed crops. Overall, creeping red fescue seed yields were below average. Yields averaged between 250-300 lbs/acre, ranging from 150-600 lbs/acre. Some farmers had some first year fields' yield higher, in the 600-800 lbs/acre range, but there were not many of them. The lower yields were expected, as moisture conditions were quite dry last fall, and this combined with a lack of moisture throughout this summer. Fescue that was in areas that received good moisture last fall did considerably better. Seed yields on second year production fields were very poor. Seed weights are reported as lower than average. Seed quality is generally good, although cleavers have been showing up in some samples.

There were very few new plantings of creeping red fescue this past spring, with any new stands that were seeded quite patchy and poorly developed. Recent rains in September may improve establishment of some of the new stands but the plants are not expected to develop to a sufficient size for good seed production next year. One bright spot is that fescue stands which were rejuvenated, by ploughing this spring or last fall, look to be in very good condition. This is particularly true in the south western part of the Peace and north of Ft. St. John, where there is a large concentration of fescue growers. These areas have received rainfall over the past two months which has improved the growth and development of fescue plants for next years' crop.

Acres of fescue continue to decline because of price and poor establishment. Winter wheat is replacing many of the fescue acres that used to be grown in the Peace. There is a lack of interest in growing creeping red fescue at this point in time, which is definitely a concern to the seed trade.

### **Timothy**

A number of older stands of timothy were affected by cutworms this spring. The damage was quite evident by the middle of May, particularly on the tops of hills. Newer timothy seed fields looked quite good in May (besides the field affected by cutworms) but lack of rain in June resulted in severe drought damage and fields never recovered. Fields that were drought-affected had yields in the 150-200 lb/acre range. Some areas that did receive some rains during the summer, notably the south east parts of the Peace, had reported timothy seed yields up around 400-500 lbs/acre. Overall though, timothy seed yields were poor. Timothy acres, both common and certified, are likely at an all time low. There were very few plantings of new timothy stands this spring.



*Cutworm Damage to Timothy Seed Crop in May  
Photo Credit: Calvin Yoder, AAFRD*

### **Bromegrasses**

Smooth bromegrass seed yields are reported as being extremely variable. Numerous fields showed good for seed potential but did not yield as well as expected. Still, other reports indicate that yields were quite good and well above average. There is a lot of smooth bromegrass seed in storage, as both demand and price are low. Acres of meadow bromegrass were minimal, and very few yields have been reported as of yet.

### **Legumes**

To date, very few acres of legume seed crops have been harvested. Seed set looked good on the clovers but fields could have used an extra rain during the summer to prolong flowering. One field of alsike that has been harvested is reported to be in the 400 lb/acre range. One yield report on red clover was in the 350 lb/acre range. Not bad considering how dry it was. There were very few fields of alsike in the region this past summer. However, a number of new plantings of both red and alsike clover occurred this spring. Stands planted before the May long weekend look good although the plants are relatively small.

Overall, this year's turf and forage seed yields in the Peace Region are relatively poor, due mainly to the dry conditions throughout most of the Peace. Acres of all seed crops are down and there does not appear to be much interest in new seedings at this time. Grass and legume seed acres will likely remain this way until prices and demand for seed begin to recover.

## **Sustainability for the Beef Industry – What's Your Definition?**

*Peggy Strankman – Environment Manager, Canadian Cattlemen's Association*

Sustainability is back. Well actually it never really left but for a while other issues like greenhouse gas emissions and species at risk were capturing environmental headlines.

For the first time the International Meat Congress, held every two years by the International Meat Secretariat (IMS) featured several speakers under a session titled *The Meat Industry Addresses the Challenges of Sustainability*.

The first speaker in that session in Buenos Aires, September 29, was Henning Steinfeld, Lead Coordinator of the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) now infamous *Livestock's Long Shadow*. He told the Congress that there are technical solutions available to decrease livestock emissions, but policy signals are needed to encourage their use. His presentation identified that emission intensity varied by region, recognition that livestock production in the developed world was considerably more efficient than in the developing countries. However, he did make a point of specifically avoiding any discussion of the beef industry's contribution to the maintenance of biodiversity and wildlife habitat. He also avoided directly addressing any of the recent criticisms of the FAO paper from several respected scientists. Specifically, contrary to what the media selectively used out of the report, transportation emissions are less than livestock in all developed countries. Also ignored in his presentation was the fact that the report incorrectly assigned emissions from land use change to livestock production, (ie. in deforestation regions).

Bryan Weech, Director of Livestock for the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) US, reminded attendees of the saying that 'You manage what you measure' and complimented the Congress for recognizing sustainability as critical in the need to produce more with less. Weech pointed to the WWF Sustainable Beef workshop being held in Denver this November as the environment group's commitment to helping decrease the environmental footprint of the beef industry but was vague as to what the industry might be encouraged to change in its management practices. In the question period he was challenged on his statement that it took 10-15,000 litres to produce a half pound of hamburger.

*Sustainable Meat and the Retailer's Demands* was the title of Christopher Brown's presentation as the Head of Ethical and Sustainable Resourcing for ASDA Stores Ltd. In the United Kingdom ASDA is Walmart. Brown's message was that their store believes that customers want great value, safe food and increased sustainability. To meet those expectations ASDA/Walmart is engaging with suppliers and their suppliers. He spoke of not wanting to overpower consumers with data but rather empowering them with information. Brown also told the group that the process needs to use sensible metrics, and that just identifying a carbon footprint may not show the total picture. He encouraged IMS to work on issues such as identifying the avoided greenhouse gas emissions when livestock utilizes plant by-products that may end up in landfills.

More than a year ago IMS had identified the issue of GHG emissions as an area of significant challenge and opportunity that was facing the meat and livestock industry. The decision to create a specific committee to address that issue and others, such as water use and biodiversity, under the heading of sustainability was ratified by IMS members at the IMS General Assembly prior to the International Meat Congress.

This new IMS Sustainability Committee will provide a forum for livestock groups to share information, and identify and fill knowledge gaps. It will also increase communication with



*Pasture Move*  
Photo Credit: Coy Schellenberg and  
Perrin Ranching 1990, Ltd.

international groups like the FAO to provide a more balanced approach to addressing the need to “sustainably” increase food production to meet the needs of an ever increasing population.

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## 2010 Saskatchewan Forage Insect Survey – Overview

September 30, 2010

Insects, particularly the alfalfa weevil, have been of growing concern to alfalfa hay producers of



*Alfalfa Weevil – Adult*

*Photo Credit: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada*

Saskatchewan for the last several years. To determine the prevalence of insect pests in the crop, in 2010 the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada teamed up to conduct a survey of alfalfa fields across the province. The intent of the investigation was to garner data on the prevalence of alfalfa weevil and other alfalfa insect pests in Saskatchewan. The weevil, a long-time pest in south western Saskatchewan alfalfa fields, has recently spread across the province and into Manitoba.

In the last part of June and first part of July, Ministry of Agriculture Forage Specialists sampled alfalfa fields in nine districts across the province by sweep net and visual inspection of stems. Insects were collected from 10 walking sweeps at each of 10 locations per field, using a

standard 38 cm diameter insect sweep net. The insects were placed in plastic bags, and the 10 bags from each field were chilled and sent to Dr. Julie Soroka at the Saskatoon Research Centre of AAFC. The forage specialists also examined three alfalfa stems at each of the 10 sites per field for evidence of alfalfa weevil feeding. Dr. Soroka identified the insects and categorized them as pest, beneficial or other insects.

In all, 47 alfalfa forage fields and one alfalfa seed field were sampled in the survey. The excess moisture and generally cool growing weather resulted in excellent alfalfa growth and poor insect development over the season. Alfalfa stands were lush and pest insect numbers were low over most of the province this year. Even the highest alfalfa weevil numbers were much lower than the economic thresholds. Although some fields had feeding damage on many or most of the stems sampled, there was little defoliation per stem, and it is unlikely that insects affected forage production in the province this year.

Alfalfa weevil was the dominant insect pest of alfalfa in five of the 48 fields sampled, primarily in the southern and south eastern regions of the province. The most commonly encountered insect pests were lygus bugs, which dominated the pest fauna at 18 locations, especially in the northern parts of the province. Lygus numbers, however, were low in almost all fields surveyed, and the insect was unlikely to be of any consequence to alfalfa forage production. Second only to lygus as the most commonly encountered pest insect, and generally much more abundant, was alfalfa plant bug (APB), the dominant herbivorous insect in 15 alfalfa fields, especially in the Tisdale and Kindersley districts. As a piercing sucking insect, APB is not generally considered a

pest of forage alfalfa production, and economic thresholds for the pest in forage alfalfa are not known. However, heavy feeding by APB can stunt alfalfa growth and decrease fitness of the plant, and forage fields with high numbers of APB may need to be monitored, especially in drought years.

Leafhoppers were the most abundant pest insects in three of the 48 fields, possibly in association with grasses in the fields. And a variety of pests, including grasshoppers in the south west, pea aphids, mirids or small plant bugs, and sweetclover weevils were the principal insect pests of seven other fields.

The majority of fields had an array of beneficial insect species. Minute pirate bugs, efficient predators of pea aphids and other insects, were the most numerous beneficial insect in 27 fields, while an assortment of parasitic wasps dominated in 17 fields, and spiders were the most frequent predator in four fields. Other beneficial insects encountered were damsel bugs, lacewing larvae, ladybird beetles, syrphid fly larvae, rove beetles, dragon flies, big-eyed bugs, tiger beetles, and assassin bugs. *Bathyplectes curculionis*, a wasp which specifically parasitizes alfalfa weevil, was found in eight fields.



*Alfalfa Plant Bug (APB) – Adult*  
Photo Credit: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Sixteen samples of foliage submitted with the insects were found to have evidence of alfalfa blotch leafminer – either stippling of leaves made by female flies, or the actual mines and larvae of the miners. This insect reached the province from Manitoba about 10 years ago, and has been spreading west and northward since that time. The only districts not to have evidence of the fly were Tisdale and Prince Albert, suggesting that it has spread throughout most of the province.

The greatest numbers of insects found in almost all samples were flies, with numbers reaching as high as 36 flies per sweep. Most of these flies were not pest species (although some samples had formidable numbers of mosquitoes), but root maggot flies in the species *Delia* were found in several fields for unknown reasons.

The survey provided a snapshot of insect species and numbers present in forage alfalfa fields across the province. It is unlikely that insects were a production problem in 2010, but producers should be aware of their potential to cause economic damage in the future.

*For more information about this survey please contact a Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture Regional Forage Specialist. Contact information can be found at:*  
[www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/agv\\_july2010\\_10](http://www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/agv_july2010_10)

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## Fall Reminders from Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation

*Denise Dobko – Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation*

### Did you select the Forage Establishment Option?

The Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC) reminds customers who selected the Forage Establishment Option, that acres seeded to forage between October 15, 2010 and June 20, 2011 will be covered for establishment. Crops seeded during this time and germinating in the spring should be established and ready for harvest in 2011. If these acres are grazed in the year of seeding they will not be eligible for coverage. Please remember to report these seeded acres on your 2011 Seeded Acreage Report.

### Time to update your forage yields

It is important for producers to report their forage yields. This yield information is used to update your individual coverage. Without this information, nothing will be entered for your 2010 production, thereby lowering your coverage in future years. If you have second-cut production, it is to your benefit to report this information. Production declaration forms were mailed in July and additional forms are available at [www.saskcropinsurance.com](http://www.saskcropinsurance.com). CropConnect customers can submit their information online.

### Filing your forage claim

A reminder to those who have insured their acres under the Forage Program, please file your claim as quickly as possible so adjusters can complete an inspection and finalize your claim.

SCIC will not offset greenfeed crops against tame hay crops. However, your annual yield in a particular forage class does offset other acres insured to the same class.

For any acres that are unharvested as of September 30, producers can request an extension of insurance. Extensions are granted to November 15.

### Changes to the Wildlife Damage Compensation Program for 2010

A new feature of the Wildlife Damage Compensation Program is the compensation for losses to swath, bale and corn grazing feeding systems. If a producer feels grazing wildlife have resulted in a loss to one of these feeding systems they should contact SCIC who will determine the impact of the loss.

The predation component to the Wildlife Damage Compensation Program provides 100 per cent compensation for death of livestock or poultry due to predation. In the event livestock are injured, producers can receive up to 80 per cent of the animal's value to cover veterinary costs. Producers do not have to be an SCIC customer to qualify for compensation.

*If you have any questions regarding forage insurance or the Wildlife Damage Compensation Program, please contact your nearest SCIC Customer Service Office or call 1-888-935-0000.*



Coyote

Photo Credit: Alan D. Wilson,  
[www.naturespicsonline.com](http://www.naturespicsonline.com)

**Saskatchewan Hay Market Report***Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture*[www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/FeedForageListing](http://www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/FeedForageListing)**Baled Forage Prices (dollars per metric Ton) to October 12, 2010**

	Listings	Listings Priced	Tons Listed	Tons Priced	Lowest Price/Ton	Highest Price/Ton	Weighted Average Price/Ton
<b>Alfalfa</b>	17	17	6457	6457	\$50	\$77	\$63
<b>Alfalfa/Grass</b>	23	23	5602	5602	\$40	\$72	\$57
<b>Grass</b>	2	2	900	900	\$40	\$61	\$50
<b>Clover</b>	3	3	269	269	\$44	\$66	\$54
<b>Green feed</b>	7	7	1154	1154	\$44	\$72	\$58
<b>Straw</b>	3	3	638	638	\$28	\$33	\$31

**USDA Market News Service Hay Reports***USDA Market News Service**For week ending October 9, 2010***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)

Trade and movement are slow. Hay prices are mostly steady. Second cutting is near completion with some third cutting baled. Grasshoppers are causing problems in some areas. All prices dollars per ton FOB stack in medium to large square bales and rounds, unless otherwise noted. Prices are from the most recent reported sales.

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

Hay prices are steady to weak. Demand is light to moderate. Buyers' inquiry continues light as pasture grazing continues to remain mostly adequate. Producers were able to get third cutting baled up, however light tonnage was reported. Inventories on fair to good quality hay remain adequate to surplus.

All sales FOB the stack and per ton basis in large rounds or large square bales, unless otherwise stated.



	<b>Eastern Wyoming</b>	<b>Central &amp; Western Wyoming</b>	<b>Western South Dakota</b>	<b>Montana</b>
<b>Alfalfa</b>				
Premium-Supreme	\$113.00-136.00	\$113.00	\$102.00	\$96.00-102.00
Good – Premium	\$113.00-136.00	\$79.00-102.00	\$85.00-91.00	\$74.00-91.00
Fair – Good	\$91.00-113.00	\$68.00	\$68.00-85.00	\$51.00-74.00
Fair	\$74.00-91.00	-	\$45.00-57.00	-
Utility	-	-	-	-
<b>Alfalfa/Grass</b>	-	\$85.00-91.00	\$68.00-85.00	\$79.00-91.00
<b>Grass</b>	\$79.00	\$68.00	\$62.00	\$113.00-125.00*
<b>Greenfeed</b>	-	\$62.00-85.00	-	-
<b>Straw</b>	\$57.00	-	-	\$40.00

*All prices converted to CDN dollars per Metric Ton FOB stack in medium to large square bales and rounds unless other wise noted.*

\*Premium Timothy Grass

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




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The SFC would like to thank the following people who contributed to this issue:

*Lorne Klein, Trevor Lennox, Andre Bonneau, Al Foster, John Hauer, Don Perrault and Glenn Barclay – Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Forage Specialists; Michel Tremblay – Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, Provincial Specialist, Forage Crops; Glenn Friesen – Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives, Forages; Grant Lastiwka – Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Forage, Grazing and Beef Specialist; Calvin Yoder – Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Forage Seed Specialist; Peggy Strankman – Environment Manager, Canadian Cattlemen's Association; Denise Dobko – Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation.*

*Photo credits: Coy Schellenberg and Perrin Ranching 1990, Ltd.; Leanne Thompson; Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; Glenn Friesen; Calvin Yoder; and Alan D. Wilson [www.naturespicsonline.com](http://www.naturespicsonline.com).*

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**Financial support for the Saskatchewan Hay and Pasture Report has been provided by Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation**

