



# Saskatchewan Hay & Pasture Report

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## Note from the Saskatchewan Forage Council

We are happy to bring you the final edition of the Hay and Pasture Report for 2018. This Report provides production-related information for forage producers, as well as a snapshot of forage pricing as of the date of the Report. The SFC looks forward to sharing more information about Saskatchewan forage pricing and trends with our fall Forage Market Report, coming in late fall. If you are looking for more specific information regarding seeding or selecting forages, managing pastures, calculating costs or much more, take a look at the [resources page](#) on the SFC website!

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

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## Saskatchewan Agriculture Crop Report

For the period ending September 17, 2018



A wet and cool week stalled most harvest operations in the province. Sixty-two per cent of the crop is now in the bin, according to Saskatchewan Agriculture's weekly Crop Report. The five-year (2013-2017) average is 53 per cent for this time of year. Twenty-six per cent of the crop is now swathed or ready to straight-cut. Rain fell over the majority of the province, with the largest amounts being reported in the central and northern regions. Many areas in these regions recorded more than 30 mm of rain. Snow was reported in the northwest region.

Across the province, topsoil moisture conditions have improved. Cropland topsoil moisture is rated as four per cent surplus, 40 per cent adequate, 37 per cent short and 19 per cent very short. Hay land and pasture topsoil moisture is rated as 31 per cent adequate, 38 per cent short and 31 per cent very short.

Limited rainfall throughout many regions of the province has pasture conditions rated as 14 per cent in good condition, 23 per cent in fair condition, 36 per cent in poor condition and 27 per cent in very poor condition.

[Read the full report here](#)

## Cereal crops as a supplemental feed

by: Michele Simili da Silva, Ph.D.

Mitacs Post- Doctoral fellow U of S/ FCCRTU-LFCE

**Annual crops are an excellent alternative to provide supplemental or emergency feed especially under adverse circumstances as drought and feed shortage when perennial forage cannot meet the animals' requirements. Winter and spring cereals are the most suitable options for Saskatchewan conditions. These crops can be utilized to help extend the grazing season either in early spring or in late fall, stockpiled for winter grazing, standing or swath grazed. In addition, cereals crops are also a very good source of silage.**

### *Fall/winter crops*

Winter cereals are easy to establish and manage, readily available and usually very productive. This crops may be fall seeded and fall grazed, or overwintered and grazed in the spring. However, spring- seeded winter cereals frequently provide better yield and better re-growth in the year of seeding. Since its reproductive development is still not triggered by the winter cool temperatures it tends to stay in the vegetation stage and produce only leaf material what also allows it to maintain their growth and quality through the fall.

The most widely used fall or winter cereals are fall rye, winter wheat and winter triticale. Fall rye is the most winterhardy and the most resistant to diseases of the winter cereals. In addition, fall rye is the most productive among the cereals for pasture due its quick growth in both fall and spring. It turns mature much earlier than wheat and triticale which makes it the best choice for earlier spring pasture. However, it also loses feed quality and becomes unpalatable earlier in the spring than other winter cereals. Even with forage that is "certified weed-free" (tied with special blue and orange coloured twine and tagged as Certified Weed-Free) it is prudent to take precautions:

Triticale can be also a good option if the seed is available for a good price. This crop combines the palatability of wheat and vigor of rye in addition to being very yield responsive depending the conditions. However, it is not as cold-tolerant as rye.

### *Spring Cereals*

Spring cereals produce much of their growth early in the season after seeding and have a poor re-growth after being grazed. Thus, maintaining spring cereal for late summer grazing is a difficult task. However, if it is seeded in mid to late summer it will probably stay mostly leafy which will allow it to extend the grazing into the fall. Of the spring cereals barley and oats may be good options especially for early spring pasture and silage once they often provide better feed quality, palatability, yield and grazing re-growth. However, the ability to re-growth will depend on the preservation of the growing points during the grazing.

In order to select the cereal crop that best suits your conditions and needs is fundamentally important take in consideration factors such as growing conditions (soil, climatic and geographic characteristics), quality, yield potential, as well as timing and the intended use of the cereal crop.

Listed below are some additional important information that should be also considerate if you decide to use cereal crops as supplemental feed:

- Assess the nitrate, nutrient and mineral levels. Annuals crops can accumulate nitrate more than perennials especially under adverse conditions. In addition, cereal crops also are low in magnesium and calcium, and possibly high in potassium levels which can cause milk fever and tetany problems if fed in large proportions. Proper supplementation of limestone and magnesium in the ration can prevent these problems. High N fertility can also result in high K levels in annual forages. Depending on the nitrate and mineral levels found, some adjustments in the ration may be required.
- Prefer smooth awned varieties if you include barley in the feed to avoid lump jaw problems. However, if rough awned material is fed alternate rough awned with other feed is recommended in order to provide time to healing. Consult your veterinarian for treatment

## Dormant Seeding - Sometimes it Pays to Delay

by: Terry Kowalchuk M.Sc., P. Ag. - Forage Crops Provincial Specialist, Saskatchewan Agriculture

For many producers 2018 was another dry year with poor conditions for seeding perennial forage crops. Since good moisture is the key to good forage establishment fall may provide a better opportunity.

Some producers delay seeding forages till fall because there is more time available after harvest and if left till spring, inevitably forage is the last crop to go into the ground.

If you are considering seeding forages this fall you should know that most species need enough time to develop to the 2 to 3 leaf stage for winter survival. With many areas of the province reporting frost by mid-September, forage seeding should be delayed until after freeze up this year. In other words, the crop should be dormant seeded.

### Dormant seeding

is the practice of seeding forages into cold or frozen soil to prevent germination until the following spring. This seeding method is often recommended for saline areas where water tables are high and there is a risk of getting stuck during the growing season. Since seed can germinate at temperatures as low as 5 degrees Celsius, for the majority of Saskatchewan the risk of premature germination can be reduced by dormant seeding sometime after November 15th.

If time and conditions allow prior to freeze up, it is best to prepare the site. Manage heavy crop residue or areas with high weed cover by baling or grazing them off. If perennial weeds are present they should be sprayed prior to seeding because in most cases a grass-legume mixture will be seeded and chemical control options will be limited after seeding.

Direct seeding into clean standing stubble is the best scenario. Standing stubble (especially cereal stubble) helps trap snow and provides protection for seedlings in the spring. And direct seeding into frozen soil will help ensure that the seed is placed at the right depth - about a ¼ to ½ an inch below the surface. As with summer seeding, good packing is essential to provide good seed to soil contact and this helps protect the seed.

Although seed can be broadcast, surface residue can perch the seed in the residue leaving it exposed to weathering. Seed predation by rodents can also be a problem.

Regardless of seeding method, experience has shown that the dormant seeding rate should be increased by 25% percent over regular spring seeding rates to ensure adequate germination and seedling survival. This is especially important when seeding into saline areas where survival may be lower due to saline soils and weed competition.

After two consecutive dry seasons in Saskatchewan, many ephemeral wetlands have dried to the point where they can either be cropped next year (pending tillage and weed control) or can be seeded to perennials. If the area is heavily infested with foxtail barley and other salt tolerant species, perennials may be the wiser choice.

Fall preparation and dormant seeding in November may help get the job done.

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## It can pay exponentially to have a precision rancher mindset

Beef Cattle Research Council Blog, August 9, 2018

[www.beefresearch.ca](http://www.beefresearch.ca)

*How three 5% changes increase profit by more than 300%*

A "precision rancher" is someone who, recognizing that agriculture operates on small margins, utilizes every technology, production practice and management technique that is appropriate for their climate, soil zone and production system in order to maximize their profits.

Producers make dozens of decisions every season to support the reproduction and productivity of their cow herd and the quality and yield of their forages, knowing that there are trade-offs with many choices. Incremental changes have great potential, both positively and negatively, to impact the bottom line. Monitoring and managing productivity, price and input costs can significantly increase competitiveness by helping ensure that valuable, incremental opportunities are not ignored.

### **The 5% Rule: Productivity, Price and Costs**

In terms of net income, economists have found that the difference between the top 25% of agricultural operations and the average operation is typically small, as little as 5% on inputs, production or price. If you change input costs, productivity and price each by 5%, it makes a tremendous impact on the bottom line.

[Read the full article here.](#)



# Nitrates could be an issue in some feed this year

Adapted from Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

Recent frosts have raised concerns about nitrate in feed for livestock. Frost and low temperatures all interfere with normal plant growth and can cause nitrate to accumulate in plants. In cases where frost damages or destroys plant leaves, photosynthetic activity is limited, and nitrate that is normally absorbed by the roots accumulates in the stems or stalks.

Under normal conditions, cattle convert the nitrate in forage to nitrite. This is then converted to ammonia and used by microbes in the rumen to make protein. In situations where the feed contains high levels of nitrate, the nitrate converts to nitrite faster than nitrite converts to ammonia. When this occurs, nitrite accumulates and is absorbed into the bloodstream where it binds to hemoglobin and reduces the oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood. In acute cases animals die by asphyxiation.

Symptoms of lethal nitrate poisoning include laboured breathing, frothing at the mouth, rapid pulse, weakness, diarrhea, frequent urination, muscle tremors, incoordination and convulsions, collapse and death. Death may occur in three to four hours. If an animal or animals are in obvious stress as described above, contact your local veterinarian immediately.

Sub lethal doses of nitrate may result in loss of appetite, reduced milk production, slow growth and abortion. Abortion due to nitrate poisoning is accompanied or preceded by some other evidence of nitrate problems in the adult animal, such as chocolate-coloured blood and bluish discolouration of unpigmented areas of the skin or mucous membranes.

If you suspect a nitrate problem with your feed contact your Regional Livestock Specialist. Depending on the situation, they may recommend sending a feed sample to a lab and provide you with information about the best way to collect, store and ship the sample.

Even if the sample tests high, all is not lost. The risk of toxic effects depends on the amount of nitrate in the feed and how fast the feed is consumed. Feeding small amounts of a high nitrate feed at intervals during the day can increase the total amount of nitrate tolerated by livestock without adverse effects and helps livestock adjust to high nitrate feeds. Do not use feeds containing more than 0.5 per cent nitrate if the animals have not been conditioned.

To help animals safely make the transition to high-nitrate forages, these feeds should be physically mixed with low-nitrate forages so that the overall nitrate level is less than 0.5 per cent. Putting out one bale of high-nitrate feed along with one or more bales of low-nitrate feed is not acceptable, the feed must be physically mixed together to blend the nitrates down to a safe level. Be sure to make the transition to the questionable feed over a period of one to two weeks and to avoid moving cattle on and off high-nitrate feeds.

If mixing is not possible, put out low-nitrate feed at the beginning of each feeding and follow up with the higher-nitrate feed to ensure each animal has consumed the low-nitrate feed first.

A balanced ration tends to reduce problems from nitrates in the ration. Feeding adequate levels of energy, vitamins (A and E) and trace minerals reduces the risk of toxicity. Feeding grain in combination with high-nitrate feeds helps reduce the effect of the nitrate content. Energy from the grain apparently helps complete the conversion of nitrate to bacterial protein in the rumen. This can be another tool in managing high-nitrate forage which cannot be physically mixed with low-nitrate forage.

If the animals are in good body condition, receiving a balanced ration and have been introduced to high-nitrate feed over a period of time, it is possible for them to maintain normal levels of growth while consuming feeds with nitrate levels of 1.0 per cent or higher. Livestock should have access to clean water at all times.

Do not feed damp hay, straw or fodder suspected of being high in nitrate. Damp feed seems to be more toxic because some of the nitrate has already been converted to the more toxic nitrite.

For more details about nitrate toxicity, refer to the full article at: <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/business/agriculture-natural-resources-and-industry/agribusiness-farmers-and-ranchers/livestock/animal-health-and-welfare/nitrate-toxicity>

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## Saskatchewan Hay Market Report

As of March 31, 2017 the Saskatchewan Agriculture Forage, Feed and Custom Service Listing site has

been discontinued.

A scan of online ads revealed some listings for hay for sale in recent weeks. Hay wanted ads currently consist mainly of requests for small square bales by acreage owners or horse owners looking for winter feed. Average asking prices this week were:

Alfalfa-Grass Hay: \$181/metric tonne (4 offers) and \$87.50/bale (2 offers)

First Cut Alfalfa Hay: 3 offers, no pricing

Grass Hay: \$138/metric tonne (2 offers)

Small Square Bales: \$6.60/bale average, with a range of \$5-\$8/bale, higher prices are alfalfa hay

*Note that very few ads include detailed forage quality analysis, or offer to provide these details. Before purchasing hay, be sure to request this information. Bale weights are often only estimates, so it is prudent to ask if the bales have been weighed.*

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## USDA Market News Service Hay Report September 20, 2018

### Wyoming Hay Report

Compared to last week all reported forages sold steady. Demand was moderated with most of the reported hay going to out of state buyers. Warmer weather the last few days and many producers are on third cutting of alfalfa and mixed hay varieties. All prices are dollars per ton FOB the field or hay barn unless otherwise noted. Read the full report [here](#).

**South Dakota Hay Report** Compared to last week: All classes of hay remain steady, few reported sales however. Demand moderate for alfalfa, good for high quality grass hay to start calves on feed. Cool weather early in the week, which slowed down drying of hay, followed up by 4-6 inches of rain in SE SD basically ruining any cut hay. All hay and straw sold by the ton FOB, unless otherwise noted. Read the full report [here](#).

**Weekly Montana Hay Report** Compared to last week: Alfalfa hay prices sold fully steady. Hay demand continues to be light on heavy supplies. Hay movement was slow this week. Ranchers, seeing heavy supplies, have not been very active in buying hay as summer pasture and grazing remains available. Some producers have limited 3rd cutting due to heavy supplies and have opted to graze instead of hay. Dairy demand for hay from Idaho and Washington has been limited due to competitive hay prices in their respective states. Export demand remains strong as loads of hay continue to sell to exporters along the west coast. Demand for hay to ship to drought areas in Colorado, New Mexico and Texas continues to be mostly good. Square prices continue to see a premium to rounds due to the shipping advantage. The straw continues to sell steady. All prices are dollars per ton and FOB unless otherwise noted. Read the full report [here](#).

USDA Hay Prices for September 20, 2018

	Wyoming	Pipestone, MN	South Dakota	Montana
Alfalfa				
Supreme	-	-	200 220**	200- 250**
Premium	175-192 200**	-	-	-
Good	150-160 160**	-	150-170*	120-130 115- 130*
Fair-Good	130-140	110* 105**	150	90-110 85-110*
Utility	-	80-85*	90	70-90 60-90*
Grass				
Premium	-	110*	140* 170**	200**
Good	-	90-95*	120*	185** 120*
Fair	-	70-80*	100*	125 115-

Utility	-	50-65*	-	125* 130**
Timothy				
Premium	-	-	-	210- 240**
Good	-	-	-	160- 180**
Alfalfa/Grass				
Premium	185-200	150-190 200**	-	-
Good	140-150	115*	-	125-140
Fair	-	130-140 100*	-	110-115 105- 110* 120- 130**
Utility	-	50*	-	70-90
Barley Straw	-	50**	-	40-50 40-50*
Wheat Straw	-	-	-	35-40

\*large rounds \*\*small squares  
All prices per ton and FOB stack, unless otherwise noted

To read the full reports and to view the hay quality designations - physical descriptions [click here](#).

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