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Saskatchewan Hay & Pasture Report

Welcome to our third edition of the Hay & Pasture Report for 2024.
This issue contains forage pricing information, crop report excerpts from Saskatchewan and neighbouring provinces and updates from forage research!

For more resources and for past editions of the Report, check out the SFC website.

Visit the SFC Website

Saskatchewan Agriculture Crop Report

Excerpts from the Report for the period July 30-August 5, 2024

Crops continue to rapidly advance with the increased temperatures and lack of moisture experienced throughout much of the province this past week. Conditions have led to a further decline in yield potential for many crops. Although any moisture received would be too late for advanced crops, producers indicate moisture would still be beneficial for later seeded crops to help with grain fill along with supporting pasture conditions.

The heat and dry conditions have brought harvest on quickly in some regions of the province. Provincially, harvest is now two per cent complete. This is aligned with the five-year and 10-year averages of two per cent. Harvest progress is led by the southwest region with four per cent complete, followed by one per cent complete for the southeast and east-central regions. All other producers are preparing for harvest by getting equipment ready, cleaning out bins and hauling grain.

Many producers are wrapping up their haying and silage operations. Provincially, dryland alfalfa yields are estimated to be 2.13 tonnes per acre, while greenfeed is estimated to be 2.63 tonnes per acre. Irrigated alfalfa yields are estimated to be 2.79 tonnes per acre, with greenfeed yield estimated at 3.34 tonnes per acre. Silage yields are estimated to be 5.67 tonnes per acre provincially.

Topsoil moisture continued to decline this week. Provincially, cropland topsoil moisture is rated as 29 per cent adequate, 53 per cent short and 18 per cent very short. Hayland topsoil moisture is reported at 27 per cent adequate, 51 per cent short and 22 per cent very short. Pasture topsoil moisture is 20 per cent adequate, 50 per cent short and 30 per cent very short.

Read the full Crop Report here

Reports on hay and pasture conditions from neighbouring provinces

Excerpt from Manitoba Crop Report
Issue 15, Weekly Crop Report as of August 6, 2024

Forages

- Good progress has been made putting up hay and silage. First cut of most tame forages is complete and work on native stands continues.
- Hay yields are being reported in the 2.5-3 tonnes per acre range on tame hay stands.
- Dairy producers are into second cut harvest of alfalfa fields and are reporting good yields.
- The majority of first cut beef hay harvest is complete. Beef producers are beginning second cut and reporting suitable yields.
- The high humidity and heavy morning dew has made it difficult for hay to dry, which will lower quality. Some swaths have been flipped multiple times to improve drying. As a result, more producers have opted to use grass intended for hay as bale silage.
- Cereal silage is about half done and yields look to be average to above average. Yields in the northwest region reported to be 8 tons/acre.

Livestock

- Pastures are slowing due to recent heat and dry conditions in the northwest and southwest regions. Pasture management practices are making a difference, but limited soil moisture reserves are affecting all pastures. Cooler weather and precipitation are needed to improve annual forage and pastures.
- In the eastern and central regions pasture growth is good and cattle are making the most of strong growth.
- Producers are attempting to control fly numbers on pasture and are looking for pink eye and foot rot where conditions remain wet underfoot.
- Dugouts are at 80% of normal capacity, but reports indicate that dugouts are drying out in parts of the Southwest region

Read the full report here

Excerpt from Alberta Crop Report
Crop Conditions as of August 6, 2024

Over the last week, widespread thunderstorms brought much needed moisture across the province (see map). The storms helped lower temperatures to the mid to high 20s across all regions. This provided relief for crops which have been stressed due to prolonged periods of high temperatures. The rain is expected to help later-seeded crops meet yield expectations and promote growth in parched hay and pasture fields. The heat stress during July has caused crop development to accelerate, resulting in crops maturing ahead of historical averages for this week, with spring wheat and barley reported as in the early stages of dough development, and oats at the late stages of milk development. However, reduced pasture and hay growth through the July heat wave is resulting in difficult decisions to be made, with all regions noting that some producers are choosing to silage their poorer crops to improve their supply of livestock feed.t.

Over the past week, cooler temperatures and rainfall have improved the provincial surface soil moisture. Surface soil moisture rated as good to excellent in Alberta is 40 per cent, a weekly increase of 7 per cent (see Table 2). Regionally, soil moisture rated as good to excellent is 35 per cent in the South Region, remaining unchanged from last week. The Central Region increased to 38 per cent, up by 8 per cent. The North East improved to 41 per cent, a 7 per cent rise. The North West saw a significant increase to 43 per cent, up by 26 per cent. The Peace Region also increased, reaching 60 per cent, a 10 per cent gain.

Pasture conditions have slowly decreased under hot dry conditions since the beginning of July with a provincial good to excellent rating of 40 per cent, which is 2 per cent lower than last week (See Table 3 and Figure 1). Regionally, 41 (45 per cent last week) of pasture is rated good to excellent in the South Region, 39 (39) per cent in the Central Region, 36 (40) per cent in the North East Region, 26 (25) per cent in the North West Region and 63 (63) per cent in the Peace Region.

Currently, provincial tame hay is rated 34 per cent good to excellent, slightly down from last week's 36 per cent. Regionally, 38 per cent (42 last week) of tame hay is rated good to excellent in the South Region, 21 (21) per cent in the Central Region, 24 (29) per cent in the North East Region, 32 (30) per cent in the North West Region and 63 (63) per cent in the Peace Region.

Read the full report here

BCRC Research Summary: Collaborative Testing and Development of Forage Barley Varieties for Western Canada

by: Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC)

Researchers
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Flavio Capettini (Barley breeder, Alberta Ag); Lori Oatway (Feed quality, Alberta Ag); Erin Collier (Research extension, Alberta Ag); Vern Baron (Forage agronomist, AAFC Lacombe); Ana Badea (Barley breeder, AAFC Brandon); and Brett Mollison (Agronomist, AAFC Melfort).

Status: Completed March 2024

What They Did
This project was a variety trial in which newly developed barley lines were tested against four commonly used varieties (AB Cattlelac, CDC Austenson, CDC Cowboy, Vivar). Two separate trials were conducted, one in which varieties were assessed for forage traits and another in which they were assessed for feed traits. The forage set was tested in seven locations in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba and the grain set was tested at 15 locations. Researchers evaluated the varieties for various agronomic and feed quality parameters with an emphasis on feed and forage traits.

What They Learned
In each of the three years of testing, the barley lines showed substantial differences both in terms of forage and grain yields, and their nutritional and digestibility profiles as animal feed. They also varied in how well they adapted to different conditions, with some of the lines seemed to be more broadly adapted, while others were better suited to specific areas.

The Western Crop Innovations (WCI) released three new varieties, AB Maximizer, AB Standswell and FB22816 that showed high potential for forage production during the duration of this project. AB Maximizer and AB Standswell were released in 2022, and these will be available to producers for the 2025 cropping season. FB22816 was released in spring 2024. It is currently undergoing seed propagation and will become commercially available to producers in 2027.

Read more

Trend toward alternative forages means adjusting crop nutrition protocols

by: Dan Peterson, Progressive Forage, June 2024

As the trend toward alternative forages grows, ongoing research and on-farm trials will be essential for refining crop nutrition strategies.

The emerging trend toward alternative forages means it may be time to adjust crop nutrition protocols. Alfalfa has long been considered the “queen” of forages thanks to its high protein solubility and digestibility balanced with amino acids. But as farmers seek to cut costs, some dairies are shifting to small grains and various sorghums. Farmers can ensure their cows stay healthy and maintain optimal milk production by providing the right balance of nutrients for these alternative crops.

Maximizing milk production while minimizing costs
Forage quality and digestibility are closely related to cow health and milk yield. The more energy a cow can pull from the feed they consume, the more milk they can produce. However, the cow’s digestive system is complicated, requiring bacteria and enzymes to digest fibrous plant material but limited in how much fat and grain it can handle.

Though highly digestible, alfalfa is an operationally expensive crop, requiring three to five harvests per season. Each harvest comes with multiple field operations, adding up to a lot of labor and equipment hours. In contrast, a small grain or other forage, such as brown midrib (BMR) male sterile sorghum, keeps fiber digestibility high and gets harvested only once or twice. This significantly reduces per-acre labor and equipment costs while maintaining milk production.

Read more

Winter cereal crops provide forage for livestock, soil health benefits

by: North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension

The use of winter annual cereals to promote soil health properties and suppress annual weeds has become more of the normal for many farmers in U.S., says North Dakota State University Extension specialists. Winter cereals provide green, active-growing plants during the fall and early-winter periods and are the first to green up in the spring. Winter cereals extend the growing season of living plant roots in the soil – feeding the soil microbiome – while providing an armor for the soil.

“Winter cereals also provide excellent forage for livestock either for grazing or to be hayed for roughage,” says Kevin Sedivec, NDSU Extension rangeland management specialist and Central Grasslands Research Extension Center director. “In fact, winter cereals were a livestock forage well before soil health became a concern.”

“Livestock grazing on cropland is becoming a more popular tool to enhance soil health and has been identified as one of the six principles of soil health,” says Miranda Meehan, NDSU Extension livestock environmental stewardship specialist. “The beauty of cover crops, including winter cereals, is they provide soil health benefits while creating excellent feed for livestock.”

Winter cereal options

The most common winter cereal used for planting green is winter rye, but other options are available. When thinking about which winter cereal to plant, determine the planned use and the crop that will follow it. Always plant a winter forage cereal – versus grain type – as they tend to be more winter hardy, leafier and more palatable for livestock feed, says Sedivec.

If the plan is to graze the winter cereal in the fall and again in the spring, the best options are winter rye or winter triticale, advises Sedivec. Both emerge fast in the spring and provide grazing in May, depending on where you’re located.

Read more

Hay pricing information

Saskatchewan Hay Market Report

The Saskatchewan Forage Council gathers forage price information throughout the year. The most recent price search (late July/early August 2024) found the following average asking prices from Facebook groups, Kijiji and other ads:

Grass hay: $158/tonne based on 825 tonnes on offer
Alfalfa hay: $180/tonne based on 4189 tonnes on offer (first cut only)
Alfalfa/grass hay: $166/tonne based on 3242 tonnes on offer
Greenfeed: $154/tonne based on 200 tonnes on offer
Clover: no offers
Cereal straw: no offers
Pulse straw: no offers
Small square bales: $5-8/bale based on 19 offers. Straight grass, straight alfalfa and mixed hay. Straw asking prices for small square bales are similar to hay asking prices.

There are additional offers of standing hay through various arrangements: priced per bale, per acre and on a crop-share basis. The asking price for those with listings averaged five cents per pound, based on the buyer cutting, baling and hauling the forage.

USDA Market News Service Hay Report

August 9, 2024

Wyoming Hay Report: Compared to last week all reported hay sales sold steady on a thin test. Demand was light. Most producers are finishing up with second cutting of hay and should get a third cutting in most areas. Scattered rain showers across the state have stopped producers from bailing hay and has shut down barley harvest in the west. Sharply cooler temperatures have prevailed across the state with highs barely hitting the low 60's. The cooler temperatures are welcomed by many with normal temperatures on the horizon. Several fires across the state. Majority of the pastures at low elevations are dry and brown. One can tell where the water has been applied as those are the only green acres driving through the country.

South Dakota Hay Report: Compared to last week, demand and movement has been slow, producers are saying it has been quiet. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor Website South Dakota is 62% normal soil moisture, 38% abnormally dry soil moisture, 22% moderate dry soil moisture, 11% severe dry soil moisture. According to the National Weather Service temperature has been average for this time of year

for the entire state, precipitation in Northeast South Dakota has been higher than normal. Southeast South Dakota has had lower precipitation than normal.

Montana Hay Report: Compared to last report: Hay sold generally steady. New crop hay continues to see slow movement as most producers are seeing light to moderate demand. Rancher to rancher sales are continuing to make an impact on the market as many ranchers are opting to sell new crop hay while feeding old crop hay this winter. Most rancher to rancher sales are at or slightly under the price that major producers have hay priced. Export hay demand remains light as many exporters have ample hay supplies purchased from last year that have yet to ship and many have hay purchased that is not sold yet. Some weakness has been seen in the dollar following lower movement in the stock market over the past couple weeks, however not enough to spur export demand. Ample supplies remain on the market as heavy carryover continues to weigh on the market. Lower cow numbers and a very mild winter along with a sticker shock for producers from record high prices in 2022 to more historically normal prices in 2023 led many producers to hold on to hay in the hopes the market improved. As a result, producers continue to struggle to finish moving old crop hay and have new crop hay yet to move as well. Prices for better new crop feeder hay is starting to establish itself with most hay priced from 125.00-145.00. Cattle herd rebuilding has been slow mostly due to high interest rates which continue to impact the cattle market as most ranchers are not willing to take out operating loans at 7-9%. Drought conditions continue to be seen in Montana, and many producers remain hopeful that drought will help eat up some of the ample hay supplies on the market. Producers in Eastern and Southern Montana are finished with second or are in the process of wrapping it up. Much of the rest of the state is well into 2nd cutting. According to the drought monitor 61.61% of the state is in Moderate drought or worse, up 18.33% from two weeks ago. 19.27% of the state is in an Severe drought or worse, down 0.32% from two weeks ago. 7.04% of the state is in Extreme drought or worse, up 0.35% from two weeks ago. Notably, 100% of the state is abnormally dry, up 2.75% from 2 weeks ago.

View the hay reports, hay prices and hay quality designations at:**https://www.ams.usda.gov/market-news/hay-reports**

Click here to view the table of hay prices for August 9, 2024 for Wyoming, South Dakota and Montana.

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