



Australian Fodder Industry Association



22 March 2024

HAY REPORT

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The hay report is produced for Dairy Australia by the Australian Fodder Industry Association (AFIA) – the national independent voice for the Australian fodder industry which connects the entire supply chain from seed to feed. For further information: www.afia.org.au

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NATIONAL SUMMARY

Driving Prices Up

- Though some parts of the inland and south east coast of Western Australia have seen very heavy rainfall, in some places leading to flooding, the south west area remains stubbornly dry, with minimal falls that are just enough to aid in the degradation of dry feed and continuing to require additional fodder supplies to keep herds healthy.
- Most of Victoria, South Australia and parts of Tasmania are seeing the effects of on-going warm and dry conditions with pastures drying out and feed availability dropping. Recent rains may see some turnaround however additional rains and time will be needed to see any green pick in dryland pastures.
- Exporters remain a player in the marketplace continuing to provide a baseline price for a wide range of cereal fodder supplies.

Driving Prices Down

- Most of QLD and coastal NSW are continuing to see good timely rains mixed with warm conditions keeping pastures moving along and supplying feed options, which is tempering immediate demand.
- Given the dry conditions, some growers are finding a market for some weather damaged hay, which had been stored unprotected outside, at a lower price point, bring the average price down or offsetting price spikes for those lines
- A good hay season this year in parts of the eastern states has seen hay sheds filling, with buyers now having more availability and a lessening of the supply constraint. This may turnaround if dry conditions persist.

Local News

- Tasmania's position has had a sharp turnaround in the last few weeks with lack of rainfall seeing a quick reduction in available pasture feed.
- As the dry conditions continue in WA the pressure on sheep flocks and the future of the industry in the face of the live export market issues are affecting the future plans of graziers, with many selling stock into the eastern states or choosing to reduce the numbers expected to lamb in the spring. This will have a flow on effect to fodder demand.
- The Bureau has stated El Niño continues and is near its end. Climate models indicate sea surface temperatures in the central tropical Pacific are expected to return to ENSO-neutral later in autumn 2024, probably by the end of April. The typical drying influence of El Niño on Australia's climate usually reduces during summer, especially in the east; however, below median rainfall is still often observed in north-east Australia. As we have seen this year and through historical data, high-impact rainfall events can occur during El Niño years, particularly during October to April when severe storm frequency peaks.
- Buyers are encouraged to feed test and view fodder before purchase to be sure of the quality of feed.

Regional Commentary

Atherton Tablelands

- The tablelands continue to see steady rainfall with 50mm of rain falling in Atherton during the week, though there were a few dry and clear days this week.
- The region continues to be green with warmth and rain boosting the grass along and providing plenty of feed to herds in the region.
- With a slight break in the weather this week, some hay was baled; however most of it had seen some weather damage after cutting so the quality and weight were of a lower level than previously expected.
- Grass seed harvest is continuing around weather events in the region.
- Some spraying for corn and peanut crops in the region was undertaken this week with a few clear days allowing growers to get on to the paddocks for the first time in a while. There are concerns regarding pest and disease control in these conditions.
- Input costs remain high; petrol is steady at \$2.05 per litre. Urea prices are starting to lift as demand begins to increase as cane growers look for the next season supply, \$1100 p/t with blended at over \$1300p/t and indications are these prices will stay high.
- Some change to pricing this week as green feed availability continues to meet livestock needs. Demand remains steady from the major players of export ships and feedlots which continue to have a steady turnover of fodder requirements. Some trucks being seen carting hay south.
- Pasture (Rhodes Grass) hay: -10 (\$330 to \$450/t). Prices decrease this week.

Please note: Hay in the Atherton Tablelands is traditionally priced at \$/bale, so it is important to check bale weights for conversion. The price range indicated is for feeds of varying quality with the price range generally indicative of quality of feed. We recommend feed testing and viewing of fodder before purchase to be sure of the quality of feed.

Darling Downs

- Limited rainfall across the region this week, with most areas seeing around 5mm of rain for the week, though along the border with NSW falls were closer to 15mm of rain. Most days clear and sunny.
- Light rains and warmth is keeping pastures green in the region and are supplying good feed options to local herds, though there are some very early signs of drying.
- Silage crops in the region continue to be cut in preparation for a turnaround for the next sowing season, comments suggest a reasonable amount of these crops were planted opportunistically for fast feed growth and forage supplies after good seasonal conditions.
- Grain crops are going in as many growers look to start the sowing season with promising conditions, good subsoil moisture is available to many growers in the region and the warm conditions are looking to give the crops an excellent start.
- Reports indicate that while Fall Army Worm remains an issue in the area in Sorghum crops, there is also an influx of pest bird species this year, impacting the crops.
- Enquiries remain somewhat subdued in the region with the ongoing good pasture feed availability and opportunistic fodder production keeping on-farm stores well supplied. High quality parcels are still in some demand, and roughage supplies are beginning to tighten a little.

- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$230 to \$300/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$ (\$350 to \$400/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$75 to \$90/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$230 to \$315/t) Prices remain steady this week.

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North Coast NSW

- Widespread moderate falls across the region this week with most areas seeing at least 25mm of rain both along the coastal areas and inland, though inland totals were closer to 15mm of rain for the week.
- Pastures in the region continue to be green, especially in the coastal areas, which are providing good green feed options, inland areas have seen less favourable rainfall, and some limited drying is being noted.
- Corn crops in the region that are slated for silage production are at full height and are filling out, these should be chopped in the next week or so depending on weather conditions.
- Crops of mungbeans sown in the inland parts of the region have benefited from the wet start to summer to produce excellent crops, many growers who would normally have planted soybeans missed the opportunity due to the dry spring and planted mungbeans instead.
- Irrigated cotton crops in the region are still looking very good but anything dryland is showing some stress due to the lack of follow up rains and a dry February. For those growers looking for additional growth a little more rain would be welcome, but some have begun harvesting the cotton crop this week and are hoping for clear dry conditions for the pick.
- Enquiries continue to be fairly stable with minimal amounts of hay moving locally and most sales appearing to be over the fence. Good green feed availability as well as conserved on-farm fodder supplies are still meeting most livestock needs. Feedlots are still purchasing supplies.
- Some change to prices this week
- Cereal hay: -10 (\$250 to \$320/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$350 to \$390/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$70 to \$90/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$240 to \$300/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Central West NSW

- Widespread falls across the region this week with most parts of the Central West recording around 20mm of rain, Forbes saw close to 30mm but the majority of that fell mid-week with most days remaining fairly dry and clear.
- Continued light rainfall is keeping pastures moving along; however flocks in the region are being fed out silage stores to supplement stubble and pastures.
- Hay production is continuing in the region, with continued warmth boosting any irrigated stands. Lucerne and speciality hay supplies have been coming off well and adding to available feed options. Recent rainfall did delay some scheduled cutting but comment suggest only by a few days.
- Some cotton in the north of the region has begun to be picked after defoliation, growers are hoping to avoid any seasonal storms to get the crop off well, given the promising look of many crops, cotton seed should be in good supply post picking.
- Corn crops are coming off in the region this week for feed consumption and pellet production.
- Growers and farmers continue to bait mice to keep them under control around sheds and paddocks, numbers are not high but the pests are continuing to be seen in the region and growers are looking to reduce numbers before autumn sowing moves into full swing.
- Enquiries are beginning to pick up in the region with a general uptick in prices reflecting the increased demand, the conditions are still favourable for pasture feeding, but more producers are looking to lock in supplies.
- Some change to prices this week
- Cereal hay: +5 (\$240 to \$325/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +10 (\$340 to \$420/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +5 (\$70 to \$110/t). Prices increase this week
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$260 to \$300/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Bega Valley

- Moderate to heavy falls across the region this week, with Bega receiving over 40mm of rain, mostly mid-week, with the weekend being clear and dry. Temperatures are beginning to dip below average for this time of year.
- Pastures in the region have been given an additional boost by the recent rains, and look to be providing good green feed availability, though there have been some reports of standing water causing some trafficability issues.
- Any fodder production that was planned for this week is being delayed after the rains came through.

- Ground preparation work has been continuing in the region for the next season but with the recent autumn rains some growers are looking to put in a crop on the back of earlier prep work and the good soil moisture.
- Enquiries in the region have increased with cooler temperatures and the wet conditions giving some producers the push to build up stores in preparation for winter. While green feed is available, hay supplies are in some demand and seeing a lift in prices to match.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +10 (\$240 to \$340/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +15 (\$360 to \$420/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +10 (\$80 to \$120/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: +10 (\$260 to \$350/t). Prices increase this week.

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Goulburn/Murray Valley

- After a number of very dry weeks, rain fell across parts of the region this week. Rainfall totals were low in the western parts of the area, rising as you head east, with Shepparton seeing around 20mm of rain, however most days were sunny and clear and more rains are needed to help pastures bounce back.
- Dry pastures are becoming the norm around the region, with very little showing good green pick availability that isn't under irrigation. Hay and grain is being fed out to livestock to supplement available pastures and stubble. Recent rainfall will not be sufficient to turn around pastures without follow up rains.
- Early sowing of canola is being seen in the region, as well as some corn crops going in to replace some recently harvested. Feed blocks of vetch and wheat are being sown in the north around the border of Vic and NSW.
- Corn crops in the region continue to be cut for silage with the weather conditions proving ideal for a good harvest and comments suggest that yields looking to very promising.
- Hay production for lucerne stands and some specialty pasture hay is continuing, with the dry conditions good for the curing of the cuts, though cutting and baling is taking place early to ensure sufficient moisture.
- The ongoing dry conditions are seeing demand lift with more enquiries coming in, however quite a bit of activity still seems to be over the fence or local area selling as optimism that autumn rains will bring a change in the outlook is still prevalent. Vetch and oaten hay appears to be in reasonable demand and is moving well when the prices align.
- Some change to pricing this week
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$255 to \$315/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +10 (\$340 to \$410/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +5 (\$90 to \$110/t). Prices increase this week.

- Pasture hay: -10 (\$250 to \$300/t). Prices decrease this week.

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Gippsland

- Light to moderate rainfall across the region this week, with the highest falls in the east and dropping as you move west. Bairnsdale recorded 20mm of rain for the week while Mirboo North saw less than 10mm of rain.
- The pastures in the west and some on the central parts of the region continue to show increasing moisture stress with less and less green in anything dryland. Parts of the central and the east however did receive some timely rain which has seen green pick continue to be available to local herds.
- Lucerne stands in the central and eastern parts of the region continue to be cut, baled and trucked out to local and intrastate customers with a steady turnover of the crops as the late summer conditions keep the crop growth moving. Recent rainfall in the east is also helping with the continued viability of the crops.
- Corn crops in the region are slated for cutting by the end of the month, though some have already been turned to silage where conditions were favourable.
- Autumn seeding has commenced in the region on a limited scale though most growers are still completing preparation work before the crops go in.
- Enquiries in the region have lifted again this week as the dry conditions begin to see a turnaround in pastures, though there is still some green feed and good on-farm fodder stored, but some local farmers are planning for winter. The south west of Victoria is continuing to take a fair amount of supply and more trucks are being seen moving hay across.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$240 to \$320/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +10 (\$330 to \$420/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +10 (\$90 to \$125/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: -10 (\$220 to \$280/t). Prices decrease this week.

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Southwest Victoria

- Widespread extremely light falls across the region this week, with most areas seeing between 1mm and 5mm of rain, though some coastal areas did see slightly higher totals of up to 10mm of rain.

- All dryland pastures in the region now are brown, with the ongoing dry conditions reducing them to dry feed only. Light rain this week has done nothing to aid in pasture recovery and may speed up the degradation of dry feed. Summer forage crops especially in the west and coastal areas have been consumed by local herds and fodder is being fed out.
- Irrigated paddocks of maize and Lucerne in the Warrnambool area are showing excellent growth and while the dry conditions are causing issues for any dryland crops, these pastures are on track for a good harvest with warmth pushing along growth
- Some fodder producers in the region have sown in their autumn schedule into irrigated paddocks over the last week, and are now turning to dry sowing the next round to keep within the schedule windows.
- Irrigated pastures in the region are continuing to provide good green feed to local dairy cows, but the pastures are being supplemented with silage, almond hulls and grains to keep the herds healthy.
- Enquiries in the region are growing as the dry conditions and reduction of available dryland pastures continue. Local supply is not sufficient to meet demand with hay and silage being carted in from other parts of Victoria as well as supplies coming over from South Australia. Lucerne, vetch and cereal hay is in fair demand.
- Some change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$260 to \$330/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +5 (\$350 to \$410/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +5 (\$90 to \$110/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$190 to \$250/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Southeast South Australia

- Another fairly dry week across the region with widespread falls of less than 5mm of rain recorded. Most days were clear and sunny.
- With continued dry conditions there is very little green pick available from dryland pastures, though there is plenty of dry feed available. Irrigated fodder crops are still providing feed opportunities, but fodder is being fed out to herds, and water is being carted in some areas.
- Lucerne production is continuing in the region off irrigated stands, with the temperatures excellent for both growth and curing of the cuts. Comments suggest that quite a sizeable amount of this crop is being sold straight off the balers to dairy and livestock producers in the border country and over into south west Victoria.
- Growers in the region have moved to maintenance and ground preparation for the next sowing season. Lime and manure is being spread for soil amelioration before autumn sowing commences.
- Enquiries continue to be steady in the region as the on-going dry conditions have livestock producers looking to secure good supply. Dry feed is still readily available and varying quality of

cereal hay is available in the market place to meet specific needs. Shipments of lucerne and cereal hay are moving around the region, with this as well as vetch heading over into Victoria.

- Some change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$270 to \$320/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$320 to \$390/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$85 to \$110/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +10 (\$210 to \$265/t). Prices increase this week.

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Central South Australia

- Widespread low rainfall across the region this week, with most areas seeing between 5mm and 10mm of rain, though there were isolated pockets that recorded up to 15mm of rain this week. Most days remained dry and clear.
- Low rainfall across the region this week did little to alleviate the dry conditions and may have sped up the degradation of dry feed quality. Fodder continues to be fed out to herds in the region, even those with access to irrigated pastures.
- Summer hay production has completed in the region for most with some irrigated pastures expected to produce some opportunistic fodder supplies, but most producers are now looking towards the next sowing season. Lucerne farmers are on their last cuts and some are harvesting seed.
- Straw season is coming to end; comments suggest that there have been ideal conditions this year for baling straw, and quite a supply has been made.
- Reports continue to indicate that some varieties of oats are in short supply in the region in preparation for the autumn sowing season and producers are required to look beyond their normal supply options to source the seed.
- Enquiries continue to be steady as dry conditions continue and pasture feed becomes less viable. Enquiries from both the domestic and export markets are lifting which is seeing an increase of hay moving through the state.
- Some change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$260 to \$335/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +5 (\$320 to \$400/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +3 (\$90 to \$105/t). Prices increase this week.

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Southwest Western Australia

- Large parts of the south west saw no rain again this week, though coastal and some eastern inland areas recorded between 5mm and 10mm of rain for the week. The high rainfall that fell earlier in the month has seen some effect on local areas, but the south west remains very dry.
- Continuing low or no rainfall in the southern parts of region is keeping pastures dry and has an adverse effect on the quality and sustainability of the available dry feed. Fodder continues to be fed out to local cattle, sheep and dairy herds and water is also being carted for animal use.
- With the good rainfall that arrived in the northern and inland parts of the region, moving into the wheatbelt, croppers are continuing to sow in the next season crops after completing ground preparation at the start of March. Some croppers dry sowed in front of the rains and are already seeing some early emergence.
- Eastern parts of the region that have seen good rainfall over the last few weeks have also seen a marked turn around in pasture growth with some land currently temporarily agisting southern flocks before seeding commences in a few weeks.
- Sheep continue to move from WA into the southern states abattoirs, as the dry conditions and uncertainty about the live export market, combined with a lack of processing space see graziers destock into eastern markets. This in addition to the reduction in mating will significantly reduce spring lambs. This drop in the local sheep flock will have a domino effect on fodder demand through the remainder of the year.
- Enquiries in the region remain high as the low availability of good pasture feed due to the dry conditions are driving need and farmers are hand feeding stock. Livestock producers are sourcing varied fodder options to keep up herd health.
- Some change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: +5 (\$300 to \$350/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$350 to \$430/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$100 to \$125/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$200 to \$270/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Northwest Tasmania

- After a number of dry weeks, some light falls in the region this week with widespread totals of 10mm to 15mm of rain along the northern coast and upwards of 20mm of rain further inland. Temperatures remain above average for this time of year.
- While the recent rainfall will have a positive effect on pastures in the North West, after a number of weeks of dry conditions the pastures in the region have fallen into a steep decline with many previously verdant paddocks now brown. Whilst there is a reasonable supply of dry feed, green feed is only available where irrigation is being employed.
- While many pastures are drying out, some deep rooted perennials such as cocksfoot and red clover appear to be continuing to thrive on the limited rainfall.

- Hay production is continuing opportunistically in the region, but the dry conditions have seen a sharp drop off of the production of any silage.
- Enquiries in the region have ramped up due to the dry conditions and the overall reduction in good green feed options. On-farm storage is still fairly reasonable, but dairy and livestock producers are looking to fill stores to prepare for the cooler months ahead.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +15 (\$245 to \$320/t) Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +5 (\$300 to \$380/t) Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$85 to \$120/t) Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +35 (\$245 to \$345/t) Prices increase this week.

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The Australian Fodder Industry Association (AFIA) is the independent, national peak body for Australia's fodder industry.

Since our establishment in 1996 our network of members, sponsors, supporters and engaged participants has worked for over 25 years to help the fodder industry grow

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