

# Hay Report

23 February 2024

DELIVERING  
*for* DAIRY



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# Summary

## Driving Prices Up

- Western Australia's dry conditions continue to have an adverse effect on the availability of feed and are placing fodder supplies in some demand. Coupled with smaller hay production this year, this is putting increasing pressure on prices in the state.
- There has been some localised price increases across southwest Victoria and South Australia as available pastures have started to dry off and demand picks up from dairy and livestock producers for the autumn and winter.
- Exporters remain a player in the market and are looking to fill shipments as well as secure reasonably high volumes of available stock on hand. This is pushing up export grade cereal prices, with a flow on effect to other fodder lines.

## Driving Prices Down

- Grass continues to grow across most parts of the east coast and is supplying good feed options for herds as well as opportunistic fodder production.
- An overall downward trend on pricing across multiple regions is being reported, this is due in part to continued good availability of pasture feed, a lack of urgent demand and producers looking to move new season fodder into sheds.
- There appears to have been some rebalancing between buyer need and supply availability recently, with more producers and end users finding a comfortable middle ground for trade, however the marketplace is still relatively quiet for this time of year.

## Local News

- The live export market issues are surfacing again, primarily in Western Australia, as the dry conditions drive a need to find a market for a large number of sheep who can no longer be supported by local pasture and affordable fodder supply.
- Over the spring 2023 to summer 2024 period, reports of hay fires seem to be much higher than previous seasons. AFIA is currently collating a list of hay fires across the country for this period, and if you are aware of other hay fire events they would welcome your input. Details can be found here <https://afia.org.au/tracking-hay-fires/>
- The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) has stated El Niño persists, although a steady weakening trend is evident in the oceanic indicators. International climate models suggest the central tropical Pacific Ocean will continue to cool in the coming months, with a return to neutral El Niño–Southern Oscillation levels expected in autumn 2024.
- Buyers are encouraged to feed test and view fodder before purchase to be sure of the quality of feed.

# Regional commentary

## Atherton Tablelands

- The region saw continual light rainfall throughout most of the week with rain falling almost every day with warm and muggy conditions all week.
- Pastures in the area remain green with plenty of feed availability to herds. Some additional sunny days would aid with pasture growth, but overall green feed availability is good. Fodder is being fed out for roughage needs.
- Hay production remains on hold in the region without enough clear dry days to ensure safe curing of the cuts. Many of the hay production crops are now well past good cutting stage and have become rank, and will only be of value for station cattle or other lower grade needs.
- Fall army worm incursion continues to be reported in increasing frequency in corn and sorghum crops. Mitigation efforts are being somewhat hindered by the wet conditions making access to some paddocks difficult.
- Input costs remain high; petrol is steady at \$2.05 per litre. Urea prices are starting to lift as demand begins to increase for the next season sowing and is around \$1100 p/t with blended at over \$1300p/t and indications are these prices will stay high.
- No change to pricing this week as green feed availability continues to meet many producer needs. Demand has also reportedly slowed from export ships, though feedlots continue a steady turnover of fodder requirements. Not a lot of hay movement being seen in the region.
- Pasture (Rhodes Grass) hay: +/-0 (\$350 to \$450/t). Prices remain steady 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

- Low rainfall across most of the region this week, with falls of between 5mm and 15mm of rain recorded however most days were clear and dry.
- The region remains consistently green with good pasture feed availability; however, a recent spell of warmer drier conditions is seeing early signs of drying out on dryland pastures. If conditions remain warm and dry this may see a need for additional fodder supplies.
- Corn crops around Texas are at full height and have filled out cobs, these crops reportedly had some pig depredation early on in the growing cycle but have rebounded well and while most are slated for feed grain, some will be cut for silage depending on local needs.
- Grain sorghum crops to the north of Toowoomba continue to show excellent growth and yield potential with a number of warm days and good moisture keeping the crops moving along well.
- Stands of lucerne in the region continue to be cut, reportedly producing very good leafy bales.
- Enquiries remain relatively steady, though there has been some movement of a few extra parcels of fodder as conditions start to dry. The situation is not yet sufficient to be seeing a large

increase in demand, though that may change if dry conditions persist. There has been some movement in straw for the first time in weeks as on-farm and feedlot storage decreases.

- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -10 (\$230 to \$310/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: -10 (\$360 to \$410/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Straw: -5 (\$75 to \$100/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$230 to \$315/t) Prices remain steady this week.

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## **North Coast NSW**

- Moderate falls across most of the region this week with the coastal areas seeing the highest falls, Lismore saw 35mm for the week, with most of this falling across one day while the rest of the week was clear, warm and dry.
- Grass remains green in the region and with recent reasonable rainfall totals the pastures are showing good growth and are providing high-quality green feed options to local livestock and dairy herds.
- Hay production is continuing for lucerne stands, most of these crops are under irrigation, though some dryland crops are continuing to produce well. Corn crops are being harvested in the inland northern parts of the region.
- Sorghum crops in the west of the region have taken advantage of the good growth conditions and have established well, with growers reportedly confident of good yields.
- Cotton crops in the north of the region are looking very good, with rainfall late last year seeing an increase in dryland plantings which have thrived in the current conditions. Producers are looking to defoliate the crops in preparation for an early April picking. There is an expectation of an increase in the amount of cotton seed availability this year.
- Enquiries have seen a small lift this week, with some enquiries from out of the region, though most local needs continue to be met by available pasture and fodder produced on-farm or by local producers. Comments suggest there is an increase in request for vetch, and some straw is beginning to move again after a few quiet weeks.
- Some change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: -10 (\$270 to \$330/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: -10 (\$350 to \$390/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Straw: -5 (\$70 to \$90/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Pasture hay: -10 (\$240 to \$320/t). Prices decrease this week.

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quality of feed. We recommend feed testing and viewing of fodder before purchase to be sure of the quality of feed.

## **Central West NSW**

- Patchy rainfall across the region this week, with some areas seeing less than 5mm of rain, while the central parts recorded up to 25mm of rain for the week.
- Pastures remain mostly green in the region, though there is some evidence of early drying and some green pick dying off, but most herds continue to be well served by pasture feed and supplemental fodder supplies.
- Fall army worm is being reported in sorghum and corn crops throughout the region from north to south, with the pest being brought down via the recent storm fronts coming out of the north. Mitigation efforts are underway to keep the pests in check and protect crops.
- Pastures of Sudan grass sown in late spring in the north of the region have come along well and have been grazed by local herds; these crops will be locked up for hay production later in the year.
- Preparation is underway in the south of the region for the next sowing season with paddocks of vetch and grazing oats set to go in early March. There is continuing comments that indicate some oat varieties remain in short supply.
- Enquiries continue to be fairly muted in the region, though the drier conditions are seeing a slight lift in demand, as well as an overall reduction in price as some producers look to clear out some space to move paddock stored hay into sheds. There appears to be a little more of a demand for vetch in the region which is being met locally.
- Some change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: -10 (\$240 to \$315/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: -10 (\$350 to \$400/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$70 to \$100/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: -5 (\$260 to \$325/t). Prices decrease this week.

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## **Bega Valley**

- Light falls across the region this week, with widespread recordings of around 15mm of rain for the week. However most days were clear and mostly sunny.
- The Bega Valley is green and the pastures lush, providing excellent feed options to livestock and dairy herds.
- Silage continues to be cut and ensiled in the region. Comments suggest very little of this fodder is for the marketplace with most being made for on-farm use.

- Oat crops sown in the middle of January on good subsoil moisture are showing excellent vigour and biomass. These will be turned over to rotational grazing in the next few weeks before being locked up for hay production.
- Recently sown forage crops are showing good post emergence growth and should be available to local herds in the next 3-4 weeks.
- Enquiries are stable in the region with the continued good green feed available to livestock and dairy herds as well as silage production and the good growth of forage crops keeping farmers optimistic. Roughage continues to be sought, and some straw is moving.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$250 to \$320/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: -5 (\$360 to \$390/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Straw: -8 (\$80 to \$100/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$260 to \$330/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## **Goulburn/Murray Valley**

- Another mostly dry week this week with rainfall only recorded on two out of the seven days, though falls were around 15mm to 20mm for those two days. Shepparton saw 19mm of rain falling later in the week, but temperatures are high and conditions windy.
- While pastures are still green in the region there are clear indications of moisture stress on dryland pastures with growth slowing and grass browning. There is still good feed availability, but additional rain is now needed.
- Irrigated lucerne stands continue to be cut and baled on cycle as the warm and dry days provide good cutting and baling conditions. Dryland lucerne is reportedly not fairing as well, and while it does have good subsoil moisture to pull from in most areas, the stands would benefit from some follow up rainfall.
- Corn crops in the north of the region are on track to be harvested late this week and through the next few weeks for silage. Most of this silage is already contracted out to local and intrastate dairy farms.
- Fast forage crops in the region are now under irrigation to keep growth moving in the warm and dry conditions.
- Enquiries in the region have seen a slight lift this week, with green feed still available and a fair amount of fodder stored on-farm. Pasture hay is being sought by buyers outside of the region, with dairy farmers in the south west looking for some additional roughage.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -5 (\$255 to \$315/t). Prices decrease this week.

- Lucerne hay: -5 (\$340 to \$390/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$90 to \$100/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: -5 (\$250 to \$320/t). Prices decrease this week.

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## **Gippsland**

- After the wild storms in the south of the region last week caused a substantial amount of damage to infrastructure, this week has seen much more stable conditions with little to no rainfall over the southern Gippsland area and only light falls in central and eastern parts of the region.
- Recovery and clean up from the wild storms cells that hit the south of the region in the week of 12 – 16 February are still ongoing with some properties still without power and road access blocked by fallen trees.
- Pasture in the region remain green, though there are some limited indications of moisture stress, and patches of brown and dry pastures are being seen. Irrigated pastures and crops are still looking green and healthy.
- Dry and warm conditions lent themselves to the production of additional protein hay, with stands of lucerne bringing in some very good quality hay.
- Corn crops in the region continue to power ahead and are showing excellent potential, these crops are slated for silage production in the next few weeks.
- Local need continues to be fairly low, though a run of drier days may see that turn around fairly quickly. Hay continues to be made in the region and pastures are still green and supplying most needs. Most enquiries are coming from the south west of Victoria where dairy and livestock producers are looking for some additional fodder options.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$240 to \$320/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: -10 (\$330 to \$400/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$90 to \$105/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: -5 (\$240 to \$280/t). Prices decrease this week.

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## **Southwest Victoria**

- No rainfall has been recorded in the region, with hot and windy conditions throughout most of the week.



- Pastures in the coastal and some inland parts of the region have dried off after a couple of dry weeks, reducing the availability of dryland pastures to provide green feed. Irrigated pastures are still green, and some inland parts which had conserved moisture are still showing green pick, but most pastures are now beginning to brown.
- After a number of consecutive dry weeks, some growers around Hamilton have finally finished off grain harvest after battling wet conditions, limited harvesting days and bogged machinery. Growers are now looking to prepare the ground for the next sowing season.
- Silage and pasture hay production has been curtailed with the drying out of pastures. Irrigated lucerne continues to be made into hay with the sunny and dry conditions providing excellent cutting and baling opportunities.
- Dryland forage crops along the coastal parts of the region are showing signs of moisture stress and would benefit from additional rain to keep growth moving.
- Enquiries in the region have lifted this week, with the drier conditions bringing more farmers to the market to supplement dairy and livestock herds. There has been a lift in demand for both pasture and cereal hay, with most being met locally but some is coming over from Gippsland.
- Some change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: -5 (\$260 to \$320/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$330 to \$390/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$90 to \$100/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: -5 (\$190 to \$250/t). Prices increase this week.

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## **Southeast South Australia**

- Another week of dry and hot conditions in the region, with no rainfall recorded and high winds reported.
- Continuing dry conditions is seeing very little dryland pasture showing much green pick availability, though there is plenty of dry feed available. Irrigated fodder crops are still providing feed opportunities to herds in the region, but fodder continues to be fed out.
- Hay production of irrigated crops continues when the conditions are favourable. High winds over the last few weeks have not been conducive to good cutting conditions, but some good quality bales were still produced.
- Reports indicate that grain producers in the region have made quite a bit of straw this season, due to the lack of good fodder availability that was broadcast late last year. There is also indication that a fair amount of feed grain is being stored on-farm in the region, which could be added into the fodder mix.
- Enquiries in the region have risen in line with the drier conditions, with producers looking to supplement available pasture feed and also supply roughage. Some enquiries from across the border in Victoria saw some lower grade pasture hay move over at a reduced price.

- Some change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$270 to \$320/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$320 to \$380/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$85 to \$110/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: -10 (\$200 to \$265/t). Prices decrease this week.

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### **Central South Australia**

- Yet another dry week across the region with no rainfall recorded at all. Sunny and clear days for most of the week, high winds have also been recorded.
- Pastures in the region have dried out with little green being seen that isn't under irrigation. Dry feed is plentiful but fodder continues to be fed out to herds in the region.
- Hay continues to be made off irrigated paddocks with warmth boosting along growth, though excessive heat is now becoming an issue and anything that is dryland planted is showing moisture stress.
- Ground preparation is underway for growers and mixed enterprises in the region for the next round of sowing, however comments suggest that until decent rain has arrived many growers won't commence any serious planting schedules. The upside to these conditions is summer weeds have been reduced so there are fewer requirements to mitigate them.
- Comments suggest that some opportunistically sown fodder crops have struggled to put on height and bulk after emergence due to the dry conditions, some mixed enterprises are turning the failed crops over to grazing for local sheep flocks.
- Enquiries are lifting in the region as the dry period extends and available green pasture feed drops. There does appear to be a reasonable amount of on-farm stored fodder, however livestock producers are looking to ensure supply and are keeping sheds topped up.
- No change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$260 to \$325/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$320 to \$390/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$90 to \$105/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## Southwest Western Australia

- Dry conditions continue in the region this week with no rainfall recorded, coupled with high temperatures and winds.
- Another week of no rainfall has seen continued degradation in pastures, with fodder continuing to be fed out to support livestock herds.
- Straw baling in the region is now complete for any growers choosing to make straw, comments suggest some chose to create moisture mats to preserve any available soil moisture leading into the next season, but many made straw to help fill the expected feed gap.
- Mixed farming enterprises in the region as well as dedicated livestock producers now have to cart water to herds due to the prolonged dry period that the area has experienced. Very few dams have any water left in them at this stage. There are some limited reports of sheep being culled in the worst hit areas, and comments suggest more of this may occur.
- The live export debate is once again rising to the surface in light of the very dry conditions as well as recent news reports regarding sheep exports as well as the live cattle export trade.
- Enquiries remain steady in the region as the ongoing dry conditions continue to see livestock and dairy farmers buying in feed for herds. Farmers are looking at a range of fodder mixes outside of the traditional hay, silage and feed grain to balance cost and availability.
- Some change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: -5 (\$300 to \$340/t). Prices have decreased 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 (\$210 to \$270/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## Northwest Tasmania

- Mostly dry across the region this week with the coastal areas seeing no rainfall at all, and falls of less than 5mm in the inland parts of the region. Strong winds and higher than usual temperatures have also been recorded.
- Pastures are still green in the northwest, though a recent spate of warmer, drier days is seeing some early signs of drying in inland areas, though most coastal areas remain fairly green.
- The warmer conditions are helping some later sown cereal crops in the region to reach maturity. New season straw is now becoming available with the grass seed harvest reaching the end.
- Fodder production is continuing, with good regrowth on some dryland stands, and irrigated protein hay and pastures continuing to roll through the usual summer production schedules.
- Enquiries have lifted a little as warmer temperatures have seen some early evidence of drying pastures; most local demand is from larger dairy farms looking to ensure available supply to

supplement pastures. Pasture hay is in good demand, and is moving well both locally and to other parts of the state.

- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +5 (\$255 to \$290/t) Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$300 to \$370/t) Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$85 to \$120/t) Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +10 (\$215 to \$295/t) Prices increase this week.

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Australian Fodder Industry Association

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