

# Hay Report

21 February 2025

DELIVERING  
*for* DAIRY



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# Summary

## Driving Prices Up

- Prolonged dry weather dominates Southwest Victoria, Central South Australia, and Southwest WA, with some areas seeing no substantial rainfall for months. Limited water availability and feed shortages are increasing reliance on hay.
- Lucerne prices steadily climb across Darling Downs, Bega Valley, and Goulburn/Murray Valley due to limited supply and interest from buyers prioritising high-quality feed.
- In areas like Central West NSW and Southwest Victoria, growers are holding onto hay supplies for personal use, citing the unpredictability of future weather conditions.

## Driving Prices Down

- Northwest Tasmania reports strong local hay availability despite challenging dry conditions, with pasture hay dropping to \$250/t and cereal straw reaching \$150/t delivered.
- Heavy rainfall in Atherton Tablelands and North Coast NSW keeps growers reliant on fresh pasture rather than hay purchases. While rainfall is patchy in Gippsland, wet conditions in some areas have slowed local movement.
- Growing lucerne availability from Cowra and Forbes entering regions like Bega Valley and Goulburn/Murray Valley is helping stabilise prices, with utility-grade lucerne easing to \$350/t.

## Local News

- Across Southwest Victoria, Central South Australia, and Southwest WA, ongoing drought conditions push growers to adopt adaptive strategies such as reducing livestock, sourcing agistment, and relying on water-saving practices.
- Northwest Tasmania continues to struggle with bushfire warnings amidst record dry conditions. Showers are forecast for parts of the state, but rainfall in the northwest remains minimal.
- In Goulburn/Murray Valley, dry conditions aid hay recovery after a wet season last year, while the February feed gap contributes to steady demand. Lucerne cutting is underway, and its quality is slowly improving.
- Cereal and vetch hay flow into the South Coast from Central West NSW, helping ease reliance on costly imports, while local silage production is beginning to slow external shipments.
- Buyers are encouraged to feed test and view fodder before purchase to ensure the quality of feed.

# Regional commentary

## Atherton Tablelands

- There's no movement of hay in the region right now. The persistent wet weather is a significant factor, with some areas receiving up to 100mm of rainfall this past week.
- The Bureau of Meteorology has officially cancelled the QLD heatwave warning thanks to the recent rains.
- With these conditions, no producers are making hay, and not much is shifting. Buyers are also hesitant to spend too much, given the additional transport costs.
- Pricing remains hard to pin down, but there's no evidence of notable market activity in this region under the continued wet weather.
- Outlook: No changes to hay pricing this week. Wet conditions are keeping things at a standstill, with pasture (Rhodes grass) hay prices holding steady.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Pasture (Rhodes Grass) hay: +/-0 (\$280 to \$380/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

- Oaten hay is starting to appear for sale, including both utility and prime grades. Reports suggest generally good quality, suited to a variety of markets, with well-stacked, uniform bales and good access. However, pricing has been hard to find, leaving potential buyers in the dark.
- Shredded lucerne is also hitting the market but has been found at hyperinflated prices compared to the last reported weeks for lucerne hay in the region. This raises questions about how much interest it will generate at these levels.
- The region experienced the expected storms, bringing warmer temperatures that are promising for the upcoming summer pasture and cropping season. Rainfall of less than 5mm is forecast across the week, so no significant impacts are anticipated.
- Temperatures remain steady across the region, with Goondiwindi reaching highs of 33°C mid-week, while Stanthorpe further east will stay cooler with maximums of 25°C.
- The Bureau of Meteorology has cancelled the Queensland heatwave warning following recent rainfall.
- Outlook: Warmer temperatures and limited rainfall should allow for steady progress in crops and pastures. With oaten hay entering the market and lucerne at a premium, buyers will need to weigh their options carefully heading into the summer season.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$350 to \$430/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$450 to \$505/t). Prices remain steady this week.

- Straw: +/-0 (\$200 to \$220/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$220 to \$270/t) Prices remain steady this week.

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## North Coast NSW

- Hay movement remains sluggish in the region, with no key varieties appearing for sale online except for Rhodes grass.
- Some coastal areas received up to 100mm of rain last week, keeping temperatures cool and conditions manageable. While similar rainfall is predicted along the coast for the coming week, the rest of the region is in for a much drier spell.
- Growers sentiment reflects the slow pace of trade. One grower shared that local demand has been almost non-existent, with hay stocks remaining plentiful following a flush season. Most farms are still working through hay purchased pre-Christmas, and while a few are considering their winter stores, enquiries remain limited. Reports of dairy farmers sourcing cereal hay from Tamworth have been the exception.
- Growers are taking advantage of the respite, quietly baling and monitoring the weather as they prepare for the months ahead. With favourable weather recently, there's little expectation for significant price movement anytime soon, although conditions could shift if hay supplies start running low.
- The region's steady conditions are in stark contrast to some other parts of the country. However, the Red Fire Ant invasion remains a lingering issue, with ongoing monitoring and treatment required to manage the threat.
- While the market remains quiet and prices stable, the shift toward winter planning could bring increased enquiries in the near future. For now, most growers are holding steady and watching the weather closely.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$280 to \$400/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$370 to \$420/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$150 to \$250/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$275 to \$350/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## Central West NSW

- The region saw variable rainfall last week, with some areas receiving 50mm while others recorded no rain at all, making it a challenge to analyse regional conditions accurately. The

coming week is expected to be predominantly dry, with only 10mm of rain predicted across most of the state. This continued dry spell is adding pressure for producers awaiting the rainfall needed for a favourable hay-making season.

- Shedded oaten hay is starting to appear on the market, and interest seems to be growing, with listings online receiving considerable views. Some sellers are asking up to \$470/t, indicating increasing pressure on pricing; however, movement remains slow.
- Local sentiment reflects concerns over pricing and demand. Some growers report hearing of price rises, which is causing unease in the region. Meanwhile, one grower has adjusted his approach, shifting focus to small bales instead of big bales, citing a smaller yet more reliable market for small-scale buyers. This decision follows the big bale market's struggle to recover after the 2022 floods. Reports suggest that the market remains "dead" in some areas, making pricing conversations tricky, as low demand limits movement.
- While prices show some increases this week, the broader picture points to uncertainty. With no significant rains forecast, conditions could strain further, driving a cautious and conflicted hay market.
- Growers continue to face challenges balancing supply, demand, and pricing. For now, increased listings and growing interest online may indicate a slow but steady buildup of momentum in the region's hay market.
- Significant change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +15 (\$270 to \$310/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +5 (\$365 to \$445/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$115 to \$165/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +40 (\$270 to \$310/t). Prices increase this week.

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## **Bega Valley**

- The Bega Valley received patchy rainfall again this week, although it was drier than in the past fortnight. Temperatures remain mild, with average maximums ranging from the low to high 20s.
- Strong wind warnings have been issued for the Eden area and coast, which may cause disruptions to local operations such as hay transport.
- Little hay is being moved out of the region, as recent rainfall and pricing remain barriers. Hay prices here continue to rank among the highest in Australia.
- Lucerne production appears to be ramping up, with increasing availability helping to stabilise prices. Prime lucerne has eased to \$400/t (down from \$450/t), while utility-grade lucerne has softened to \$350/t. Additional supplies from Cowra and Forbes are entering the region, providing greater consistency in the market.
- Cereal and vetch hay continue to flow into the South Coast from inland areas, particularly from Dubbo in the Central West. The start of local silage production may soon slow the volume of imports into the region.

- While lucerne prices are gradually easing and supply is improving, hay prices in the Bega Valley remain among the highest in Australia. Local silage production could help reduce dependence on hay imports, but weather variability will continue to shape market trends in the coming weeks.
- Significant change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +15 (\$355 to \$405/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +20 (\$435 to \$515/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$215 to \$255/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +40 (\$360 to \$420/t). Prices increase this week.

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## **Goulburn/Murray Valley**

- The region's weather remains largely dry despite cooler southerly winds brought in by a high-pressure system. Most areas reported little to no rainfall last week, aside from localised showers in places like Kerang. Temperatures are expected to stay in the mid to high 20s, with a slim chance of up to 15mm of rain in parts like Shepparton and Bendigo over the coming week. The dry conditions are generally viewed as favourable for hay recovery and quality after last year's wet challenges damaged summer crops.
- Hay movement is picking up across Victoria, with prices increasing in response to steady demand. Lucerne hay, in particular, is gaining traction, selling online for up to \$480/t, though on-farm prices are sitting between \$330 to \$400/t, excluding transport.
- As ryegrass hay becomes harder to find, pasture hay has seen increased demand, leading to price hikes of \$30–50/t in some areas. Farmgate ryegrass is moving at \$300/t, while cereal hay remains steady on-farm at around \$300/t, in line with reported values. Meanwhile, beef producers in the Goulburn Valley are showing interest in both cereal and ryegrass hay for protein supplementation.
- Growers in parts of the region report cutting their 4th or 5th round of lucerne but acknowledge mixed results with quality still recovering. Vetch is playing a key role in slowing the pressure on lucerne demand. For now, the weather outlook remains supportive of ongoing improvement, with many producers hoping for a proper autumn break rather than the disruption of isolated thunderstorms.
- In summary: steady movement, climbing prices, and growers adjusting to variable crop conditions as the February feed gap keeps demand strong.
  - Some change to pricing this week.
  - Cereal hay: +5 (\$280 to \$320/t). Prices increase this week.
  - Lucerne hay: +5 (\$375 to \$445/t). Prices increase this week.
  - Straw: +/-0 (\$110 to \$150/t). Prices remain steady this week.
  - Pasture hay: +10 (\$255 to \$285/t). Prices increase this week.

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## **Gippsland**

- Weather remains mixed across the region, with up to 100mm of rain bringing relief to some areas, while Warragul and parts of the east stay dry. Heavy rain in the Mitchell River area from the previous week has left conditions wet underfoot. Strong wind warnings are also in place for coastal zones.
- Inconsistent rainfall is influencing hay movement, with some growers holding onto stock in excessively dry areas, uncertain about future needs. In wetter areas, conditions may encourage more selling in the coming weeks.
- Prices for hay continue to rise; cereal hay is up to \$330–\$360/t, while pasture hay saw a \$10/t increase to \$260–\$280/t. Lucerne is fetching higher prices again, rising to \$445–\$485/t. Straw remains steady at \$170–\$180/t.
- As prices begin to rise, supply is a growing concern as dry conditions linger in parts of the region. Growers in areas without rainfall are navigating tough decisions: whether to sell hay or stock to keep operations running.
- The regional outlook reflects this divide with cautious optimism. Continued rain, where needed, could improve feed availability, while drier zones like Warragul remain reliant on future rainfall to ease pressure.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +5 (\$330 to \$360/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +5 (\$445 to \$485/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$170 to \$180/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +10 (\$260 to \$280/t). Prices increase this week.

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## **Southwest Victoria**

- Ongoing dryness dominates the region, with many areas receiving no significant rainfall for months. Some growers report it's the driest they've ever recorded in over 50 years. Only 10mm is forecast for the week ahead, prolonging water shortages and increasing reliance on practices like mobbing stock closer to water.
- Growers are taking varied approaches to cope with the conditions, including destocking, sourcing agistment, or moving livestock between properties with better water availability. Underground water and dam-fed systems are critical but stretched to their limits in many areas.
- Hay movement continues, especially with supply coming in from the north. Demand from sheep, beef, and dairy producers is steady, though high hay prices are adding pressure to already tight margins. Many are holding back hay for their own use, further tightening the regional supply.
- The outlook remains concerning as limited rainfall means water and feed challenges are likely to persist. Growers are managing with resilience through practices like self-produced hay and



strategic stocking decisions, but relief is unlikely until a significant weather break—potentially in March.

- Significant change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +5 (\$310 to \$350/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +15 (\$355 to \$445). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$115 to \$165/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +25 (\$255 to \$295/t). Prices increase this week.

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### **Southeast South Australia**

- Another dry week for the region, with no rainfall recorded and only 10mm forecast for the coming week. Temperatures have dropped to the mid to high 20s, with cooler nights offering some relief for livestock and crops.
- Shredded oaten hay and lucerne are appearing on the market, with lucerne listed online for as high as \$500/t. These prices are driving interest and online visits, particularly for lucerne, suggesting demand for quality hay—though many growers believe prices at this level are unrealistic.
- In Keith, activity remains minimal, with little enquiry or movement reported. Many growers are holding onto stock, possibly waiting for either prices to drop or for more clarity on their feed needs post-harvest.
- Harvesting is underway, and while rainfall is sorely needed for long-term relief, growers are hoping it holds off until their crops are out of the paddock. Sentiment remains flat as the region awaits the autumn break.
- With no significant weather changes on the horizon and hay stock slow to shift, the dry pattern continues to dominate both sentiment and decision-making in the region. Growers are managing costs carefully and monitoring market activity as they plan for the months ahead.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +5 (\$365 to \$405/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$430 to \$450/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$150 to \$180/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$265 to \$345/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## Central South Australia

- Dry conditions continue to dominate, with no rainfall recorded last week and only 5mm forecast for the coming week across 95% of the state. Temperatures have eased following recent heatwave conditions, dropping to the mid-20s in southern areas and low to mid-30s around Hawker and Port Pirie. Coastal wind warnings are currently in effect in the southern region.
- Growers are still feeling the sting of these prolonged dry conditions, with many reporting no proper rainfall for 18 months. Despite this, hay movement is surprisingly slow, as many stocked up back in October and are still working through supplies.
- The lack of current buying and selling activity seems to reflect a cautious approach, with growers holding onto what they have while closely watching the skies and hoping for an autumn break.
- Outlook: With no major weather changes on the horizon, the region remains in a holding pattern. Demand for hay may pick up if the conditions continue or supplies begin to run low, but for now, movement is limited, and sentiment remains uncertain.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$280 to \$380/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$410 to \$470/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$160 to \$200/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## Southwest Western Australia

- Hay is yet to appear for sale in the region, with movement remaining minimal.
- Dry conditions persist, with 0mm rainfall recorded in most areas over the past week. Extreme fire danger continues to pose challenges across the region, keeping growers on high alert.
- A cold front and associated troughs brought scattered showers and storms, including some severe ones, to parts of southern WA. However, rainfall has been limited and not significant enough to provide any real relief.
- Forecasts for the coming week suggest minimal rain, with temperatures sitting in the mid-20s to mid-30s. Coastal wind warnings are in effect for the southwest, with clearing showers expected, but they won't provide enough water to improve current conditions meaningfully.
- Hay supply and pricing information remain limited, contributing to uncertainty in the market. Growers are bracing for ongoing challenges, keeping an eye on weather developments and water supplies as the dry conditions stretch on.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$280 to \$350/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$400 to \$500/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$100 to \$140/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$300 to \$350/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## Northwest Tasmania

- Dry conditions persist over the region, with no rainfall recorded last week. Bushfire warnings and fire zones remain in place, keeping things challenging for growers. However, there's some relief on the horizon, with showers predicted for parts of the state. That said, rainfall forecasts for the northwest, especially around Devonport and Wynyard, remain low.
- Temperatures have dropped significantly, sitting in the mid-teens across many areas, with low 20s being the warmest—even in typically warmer zones like Devonport. A strong wind warning is in effect for the Far Northwest and Central North Coasts, creating hazardous conditions in exposed coastal areas.
- Despite the challenging conditions, local growers report adequate hay availability in the region. One grower shared that he had a narrow escape earlier in the season, describing it as being "one week away from disaster." Having stocked up on cereal hay back in October at \$380/t landed, he says prices have dropped significantly as supply remains abundant. Even with record dry conditions, hay seems to be readily available, with some noting pasture hay fetching \$250/t landed and cereal straw delivered around \$150/t.
- Northwest Tasmania appears to be in a unique position compared to other dry regions, with sentiment suggesting there's plenty of hay around despite the drought-like conditions. With rain on its way, albeit limited for this area, growers are cautiously optimistic about maintaining feed reserves over the coming months.
- Significant change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -105 (\$280 to \$220/t) Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$380 to \$430/t) Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$110 to \$160/t) Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: -45 (\$235 to \$265/t) Prices decrease this week.

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Australian Fodder Industry Association

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