

Hay Report

21 March 2025

DELIVERING
for DAIRY



Contents

Summary	3
Driving Prices Up.....	3
Driving Prices Down	3
Local News.....	3
Regional commentary	4
Atherton Tablelands	4
Darling Downs.....	4
North Coast NSW.....	5
Central West NSW	5
Bega Valley	6
Goulburn/Murray Valley	7
Gippsland.....	7
Southwest Victoria.....	8
Southeast South Australia.....	8
Central South Australia.....	9
Southwest Western Australia.....	10
Northwest Tasmania	10



Summary

Driving Prices Up

- Lack of supply has started to drive prices up across most of the country. While Straw has remained stable this week, Cereal, Lucerne and Pasture Hay have all jumped up between \$5 per tonne to \$20 per tonne.

Driving Prices Down

- The range of quality on the market is impacting overall pricing. More low-quality product is available for sale at present (usually old and weather damaged), which is being sold to those whose budget is limited. While this is not driving prices down, there is a need to be mindful of the quality available and why it is being purchased.

Local News

- Efforts to secure government drought support in South Australia stepped up this week as growers and hay producers met on the steps of Parliament House. Calling for freight subsidies to make interstate hay more affordable were met with tentative responses. Action isn't expected until the June budget, however some growers may not have the luxury of waiting until then before making some hard decisions.

- **Red Fire Ant Invasion of QLD and NSW:**

Heavy rain and flooding increase the risk of fire ants rafting through river catchment systems, meaning they could end up on your property or production areas.

Fire ants are highly adaptive and can survive floods by forming floating rafts of worker ants, brood, and the queen. Once the water recedes, these rafts settle on the ground, potentially establishing new nests on places that did not previously have fire ants.

- Buyers are encouraged to feed test and view fodder before purchase to ensure the quality of feed.

Regional commentary

Atherton Tablelands

- There's still very limited movement of hay in the region due to ongoing wet weather. Rainfall remains a major challenge, with recent heavy downpours causing significant disruptions.
- Persistent wet conditions have continued this past week. Some areas recorded several hundred millimetres of rainfall, with Townsville experiencing its heaviest rain in 27 years. A moisture-laden onshore flow and a coastal trough have been driving these significant rainfall events.
- With consistent rainfall, making hay in the Atherton Tablelands remains difficult. Paddocks are too wet for machinery, and producers are unable to dry or store hay effectively.
- Buyers continue to face challenges with additional transport costs in these conditions, which is leading to hesitation in purchasing hay.
- Pricing has remained stagnant as activities are largely at a standstill. Pasture (Rhodes grass) hay prices hold steady with minimal market activity.
- 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

- Tropical Cyclone Alfred disappointed a lot of growers across the region with the limited amount of rain that fell in cropping areas. That said, some hay is currently being planted now in areas with some rainfall.
- The past week has seen almost no rainfall across the region, and daytime temperatures are sitting in the mid to high 20s.
- Miles, Goondiwindi and Dalby reached temperatures above 35 degrees on Monday but have since dropped slightly, though still reaching into the 30s during the day.
- There is a greater spread in the quality of product on the market between high quality shedded hay and weather damaged hay, which is impacting the prices being offered to growers, primarily ex-farm.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$360 to \$440/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$455 to \$505/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$220 to \$270/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +30 (\$250 to \$300/t) Prices increase this week.

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North Coast NSW

- Hay movement remains sluggish, with most farms unable to produce or transport hay due to the ongoing wet conditions following ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred. Many paddocks remain too waterlogged for machinery, limiting local supply and activity.
- Heavy rainfall and flooding in some areas, particularly near the coast, have disrupted operations, although a few farms were spared major damage. Reports indicate that the north side of the region, around Lismore, is recovering relatively well, with little major damage to pastures. However, the south side has struggled more – flooded pastures have turned sour, leaving growers expecting a drop in local hay production in those areas.
- Over 250 truckloads of donated fodder from the Aussie Hay Runners program will arrive in April to support flood-affected growers across Clarence Valley, Richmond Valley, Kempsey, Lismore, and Kyogle. The donations have been well-received, though growers are keen to understand the quality and suitability of the hay being delivered.
- Growers are reporting little-to-no local demand for hay while donations arrive. With the influx of fodder, many are holding back purchases of cereal or lucerne hay. The market remains slow, but prices are shifting slightly due to shortages of good-quality hay.
- Scarcity of high-quality fodder continues to put subtle upward pressure on prices.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +5 (\$280 to \$400/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +20 (\$370 to \$420/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$150 to \$250/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +5 (\$250 to \$300/t). Prices increase this week.

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Central West NSW

- Rainfall remains well below average in key areas like Moree, recording just a fraction of their long-term monthly averages. Patchy rain from ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred brought 6 – 12mm of rain to parts of northern NSW, but this wasn't enough for most to make a meaningful difference. Growers are still waiting for more consistent and widespread rainfall.
- The ongoing hot daytime temperatures have been a mixed blessing. Cotton growers in regions like Hillston have benefited from the warmth, but limited rain is causing challenges elsewhere. Livestock water storages remain under pressure, and substantial rainfall—up to 100mm—will be critical for growers preparing to sow winter crops next month.

- Some growers in northern areas, with higher soil moisture levels, have started sowing dual-purpose crops like stock feed. Wheat, canola, and chickpeas are also being prepared for winter planting. However, many are holding off and waiting for follow-up rain to ensure better germination and long-term crop viability.
- Hay prices have moved higher recently, largely due to tightening stockpiles, cautious hay production, and increased demand for feed as livestock producers work to supplement grazing. Smaller bales have proven to be more dependable in the market, while larger bales remain harder to move in meaningful quantities.
- Weather forecasts offer little immediate relief. Only light showers or isolated thunderstorms are expected across the district later this week, with rainfall amounts likely under 1mm of rain – insufficient to break the dry conditions or support soil moisture recovery.
- Local sentiment reflects the challenges of navigating fluctuating conditions. Some growers are looking to adapt their strategies, while others are staying cautious and waiting for better conditions to bring certainty to their decision-making.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +5 (\$270 to \$320/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +25 (\$390 to \$470/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$115 to \$165/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +5 (\$270 to \$320/t). Prices increase this week.

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Bega Valley

- Recent rainfall from ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred has brought opportunities for some growers to begin early sowing, particularly for grazing crops. Others are planning to wait for the autumn break before starting their winter cropping programs.
- While March often sees a dry start in parts of southern NSW, recent storm activity has produced patchy rainfall, helping kick-start cropping and grazing preparations for others in the region.
- The week ahead sees a high chance of showers and possible thunderstorms, especially near the Victorian border. Conditions remain humid, with light to moderate winds expected across most of the area.
- Silage production is ramping up, providing some additional support for feed requirements. However, feed demand remains steady as growers work to balance local options with purchased hay.
- Lower-than-average summer rainfall across NSW's western and northern regions has continued to impact broader hay supplies. However, recent storm systems have offered some short-term relief to specific areas within the region.
- Some change to pricing this week.

- Cereal hay: +5 (\$355 to \$415/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +25 (\$450 to \$550/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$215 to \$255/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +5 (\$360 to \$430/t). Prices increase this week.

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Goulburn/Murray Valley

- While it is still very dry across the region, rain has been falling in various towns across the region, with an expectation of up to 40mm in Tatura and Yarrowonga. However, the rain looks to be short-lived with mostly sunny weather predicted from Saturday onwards.
- There is a fair bit of hay that is committed, however anything that has not been sold, growers are asking for an extra \$20-\$50 per tonne ex-farm.
- Pasture hay is non-existent in the region, while Straw is in demand. Straw has seen a longer season, and a few opportunistic growers have been able to receive some extra cash due to extending their season.
- Everyone is still hoping for decent rain before the end of the month. Enquiries for hay are coming through all the way down to Melbourne, and believes the future is looking good for hay. Some growers are reconsidering their planting options and are choosing to plant hay rather than canola, but that will depend on the rain.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +10 (\$290 to \$330/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +20 (\$390 to \$470/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$120 to \$150/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +5 (\$260 to \$290/t). Prices increase this week.

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Gippsland

- Autumn rains across East Gippsland have been welcomed by growers. Daytime temperatures are starting to drop down in to the low 20s, however humidity levels are high, reaching into the high 90s.
- Hay is in high demand, across the region. East Gippsland has seen some good rainfall this month which has allowed for seeding to commence.
- Lack of good quality hay is driving pricing up, which is being carted across the state to areas still in drought.

- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +10 (\$340 to \$370/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +20 (\$460 to \$510/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$170 to \$190/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +5 (\$265 to \$285/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Southwest Victoria

- A few light showers in various towns across the region but otherwise it is still dry. Daytime temperatures briefly dropped into the mid-teens but have since climbed back into the mid 20s to low 30s.
- There is a bit of movement across the region and rain is needed to assist with seeding which is due to happen next month.
- The lack of quality hay is causing some concern; however most growers are still hopeful that it will start raining soon to support a decent winter crop.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +10 (\$320 to \$360/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +20 (\$380 to \$460). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$115 to \$175/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +5 (\$260 to \$300/t). Prices increase this week.

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Southeast South Australia

- Along with growers in Central SA, Southeast producers have rallied in Adelaide, urging the government to deliver support like freight subsidies. With no immediate action expected until the June budget, growers face tough decisions as they wait for clearer direction on both policy and the season ahead.
- The region remains dry, with no meaningful rainfall this week and limited hope in the short-term forecast. Temperatures have settled into the low to mid-20s, providing relief for livestock but doing little for parched pastures. The Bureau's longer-term forecast of above-average rainfall from April to June offers a glimmer of hope.
- Hay movement is slow, with demand tied to the timing of the autumn break. Buyers are showing interest, particularly in higher-quality hay, and have noted upward price shifts.

- While rainfall is badly needed, many hope it holds off until harvesting wraps up to avoid disruptions. Producers are considering hay crops for the new season, seeing them as a more reliable option if the season is cut short and demand for feed stays strong.
- Overall, producers are cautious, with sentiment largely tied to the prospect of an autumn break. With conditions still challenging, the region looks for signs of meaningful change in the weeks ahead.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$365 to \$415/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +20 (\$440 to \$480/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$160 to \$210/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

- Central South Australia remains gripped by prolonged and devastating drought, with growers reporting no meaningful rainfall for months. Efforts to secure government support stepped up this week as growers and hay producers met on the steps of Parliament House. Their calls for freight subsidies – designed to make interstate hay more affordable – were met with tentative responses, but action isn't expected until the June budget, leaving many in a precarious position.
- The ongoing drought is pushing growers to make tough decisions. Some have drastically reduced stock numbers, with reports of sheep flocks dropping from thousands to just a few hundred breeders. Even for those with hay supplies, the strain on water resources is forcing devastating cutbacks.
- Hay prices continue to reflect these tough conditions. On-farm cereal hay is currently reaching up to \$380/t, while lucerne is commanding even higher prices. Interstate hay is being brought in for similar rates, but the steep freight costs are locking many locals out of the market. Growers are advocating for a freight subsidy to help offset these costs – a solution strongly backed by producers who believe it is vital to keeping farms operational.
- Some local hay producers are now exploring export markets to remain viable, even as demand at home grows. This reflects the uphill battle for many, caught between rising production costs and limited logistical options.
- While the region waits for significant rain, a steady soaking would provide the best outcome now that the risk of summer weed growth has passed. However, bare paddocks across the region mean heavy rainfall could cause costly damage. Recovery is likely to take at least two years, even with immediate improvements in conditions.
- For now, hay movement remains slow, with growers taking a cautious "wait and see" approach, holding onto what they have and hoping for relief on both the weather and policy fronts.
- Significant change to pricing this week.

- Cereal hay: +30 (\$330 to \$430/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +25 (\$435 to \$495/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$160 to \$200/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Southwest Western Australia

- It has been mostly sunny and warm across the region with daytime temperatures sitting in the high 20s to low 30s.
- Due to large supply and good yields of Straw, it has been moving across the region and through the export market since the end of last year.
- Because of the drought in 2023/24, growers planted extra hay to avoid being caught out this year. That decision is now influencing the domestic market - excess hay is now filtering into the domestic market as exporters are full.
- The domestic market is slowly picking up with product being transported across the state and across borders.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$200 to \$280/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$400 to \$500/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$100 to \$160/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$300 to \$350/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Northwest Tasmania

- The weather is obviously cooler across the region than on the mainland, with daytime temperatures ranging from the mid-teens to low 20s.
- There has been a scattering of light showers to support new growth, but otherwise it has been mainly dry over the past week.
- The market is still stable, and product is moving as needed.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$280 to \$220/t) Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-00 (\$390 to \$440/t) Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$110 to \$160/t) Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$235 to \$265/t) Prices remain steady this week.

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