

Hay Report

29 March 2024

DELIVERING
for DAIRY

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Summary

Driving Prices Up

- Parts of Western Australia remain very dry, with no rain falling in the southwest again this week. Pastures are providing limited feed options, which is seeing available fodder supplies in some demand.
- While Tasmania has seen some additional rain this week, most of Victoria, South Australia, and the north west of Tasmania are continuing to feel the effects of ongoing warm and dry conditions with pastures drying out and growth falling, leading to additional supplemental fodder requirements.
- Exporters remain a player in the marketplace and continue to provide a baseline price for a wide range of cereal fodder supplies.

Driving Prices Down

- The promising mix of good timely rainfall and warm conditions in Queensland and large parts of NSW is keeping pastures moving along and supplying feed options, which is tempering immediate demand.
- The favourable conditions in NSW have seen some early plantings of quick establishing varieties which will continue to provide good grazing options in winter, while also balancing 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, bringing the average price down or offsetting price spikes for those lines.

Local News

- The southern states continue to see a marked drop in available pasture feed as warm and dry conditions stalls growth and reduces quality. This is currently affecting most of Victoria, parts of South Australia and northern Tasmania.
- As the dry conditions continue in Western Australia (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 of Meteorology (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.
- 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 continued to receive steady rainfall this week, though there were a few consecutive clear days over the weekend with some sunny periods and no rainfall. Atherton received 30mm of rain for the week.
- Ongoing rain and warmth continue to see pastures flourishing in the region with plenty of good green feed available for local herds and even some opportunistic silage production where pastures are running ahead of the herds.
- The break in the wet conditions over the weekend saw a flurry of activity as producers looked to cut any crops that were viable, and bale any previous cuts which may have dried after some damp conditions. Quality on these bales is not high but some is sufficient for steers in a feed mix, while a portion will only be good for bedding or mulch.
- Grass seed harvest is continuing around weather events in the region.
- With another short clear spell this week, growers were once again undertaking maintenance and mitigation efforts on paddocks and pastures. Concerns regarding pest and disease control continue to be voiced in the face of the persistent warm and damp conditions.
- Input costs remain high; petrol is steady at \$2.05 per litre. Urea prices are also high at \$1100 p/t with blended at over \$1300p/t and indications are that there will not be a reduction in these prices in the foreseeable future.
- Prices have stabilised again 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. Not much additional movement of hay this week.
- Pasture (Rhodes Grass) hay: +/-0 (\$330 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

- Moderate rainfall across the region this week, with widespread falls averaging 40mm throughout the downs. Dalby saw 45mm of rain for the week and Goondiwindi 28mm of rain. Most days have had some sun through the week even with the rainfall.
- With the continued rainfall and warmth, pastures remain green in the region and continue to provide good green feed to local herds.
- With the good subsoil moisture and mostly clear conditions early feed oats and barley for feed and hay are currently being planted.
- Hay and silage continues to be cut in the region with forage sorghum, lucerne, Rhodes grass and speciality pasture hays all being cut and baled.

- The impact of Fall army worm on corn and sorghum crops in the region continues to be seen and has caused some reduction in yield for any crops that have now reached or are nearing maturity. The pest species load has been particularly heavy this year.
- Enquiries are fairly steady in the region with continued good pasture availability; however, some higher quality protein hay has seen movement as well as continued interest in roughage supplies which are showing some tightening.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$230 to \$300/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +10 (\$ (\$350 to \$420/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +18 (\$90 to \$110/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$230 to \$315/t) Prices remain steady this week.

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North Coast NSW

- Widespread falls throughout the region again this week, with the coastal areas seeing the highest falls, Ballina saw 60mm of rain for the week while Casino recorded closer to 40mm of rain. Much cooler than usual this week, bringing temperatures more in line with seasonal averages.
- Pastures in the region remain green, with autumn rain keeping the grass growing. Inland areas are continuing to see some limited drying, but recent rain should spark some additional green pick.
- Silage continues to be produced in the region, with corn crops beginning to come off as well as some millet and sorghum silage being cut for local and on-farm usage.
- Dryland cotton crops in the region were glad of the recent rainfall, giving them a boost before the preparation for the pick commences. Those cotton crops that were scheduled to be picked late last week and this week have reportedly been picked before most of the rain fell with good yields being reported. If the harvest continues well, there will be a fair amount of cottonseed available for feed mixes.
- There are reports of high insect pressure on some soybean crops in the far north of the region near the Queensland border, spraying is being undertaken to mitigate damage.
- Enquiries in the region remain fairly stable with some farmer-to-farmer trading, but good pastures in the coastal regions are tempering demand. Further inland more hay is moving to keep herds healthy. Feedlots and chaff mills are picking up good quality lucerne.
- Some change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$250 to \$320/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +5 (\$340 to \$410/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +5 (\$70 to \$100/t). Prices increase this week.

- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$240 to \$300/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Central West NSW

- The region saw a return to mostly clear and dry days this week, with widespread falls of between 15mm and 20mm of rain coming in mid-week. Forbes recorded 15mm of rain for the week.
- Continued light rainfall is keeping pastures moving along; however, flocks in the region are being fed out silage stores to supplement stubble and pastures.
- Lucerne crops in the region continue to be made into good quality hay with the late summer conditions increasing the number of cuts made after a potential reduction in yield due to the wet start. Comments suggest that the production should be around average, with silage expected to be cut this week for some. Teff grass has been cut for small bales for the equine industry.
- Cotton harvest is ongoing in the north of the region, with some of the pick coming off well before early rain arrived.
- Sowing of early oats has commenced on irrigated land for sheep and cattle feed. Most soil preparation has completed and paddocks are ready to plant once the autumn break arrives. Some pre-watering has occurred on irrigation paddocks, which have been ploughed ready for seeding.
- Enquiries are continuing to grow in the region with a general feeling from buyers that while conditions are still favourable for pasture feeding, those conditions can turn around and some certainty of supply is being sought with producers looking to fill sheds on-farm in preparation for winter.
- Some change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: +10 (\$250 to \$335/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +5 (\$340 to \$430/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +5 (\$70 to \$120/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$260 to \$300/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Bega Valley

- After a couple of wet weeks, the Valley saw drier conditions this week, returning to warm sunny days. Rainfall totals across the region were less than 5mm of rain, and most of that in isolated pockets.

- The valley remains green, with the good autumn rain keeping the grass growing and providing pasture options for local herds. Fodder for roughage and additional needs is still being fed out as some regrowth has been a little watery.
- Some additional silage cutting was undertaken this week in the few clear days, but most days saw some rain which has delayed any opportunistic fodder production.
- Soil preparations for the next season are currently in progress, with sowing of winter ryegrasses and oats expected to go in on the back of good rainfall and subsoil moisture profiles.
- Autumn calving for dairy cows in the region is ongoing, with pastures providing excellent conditions for the health of new calves.
- Enquiries in the region are fairly stable, with the continuing wet conditions giving some producers the push to build up stores in preparation for winter. Green feed is still in very good supply, but hay supplies are in some demand and seeing a lift in prices to match.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +5 (\$240 to \$350/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +10 (\$360 to \$440/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +10 (\$80 to \$140/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: +10 (\$270 to \$360/t). Prices increase this week.

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Goulburn/Murray Valley

- A return to dry conditions again this week, with little to no rainfall across the region and most days clear and sunny with some overcast periods. Temperatures were in the high 20's to low 30's across most of the area.
- Pastures continue to be dry across the region, with the slight rainfall last week insufficient to see any marked improvement in dryland pastures. Irrigated pastures and fodder crops are available for herds in the region, but fodder is being fed out.
- Ground preparation work and general farm maintenance are being undertaken as well as pre-season spraying, which is keeping farmers busy whilst waiting for the autumn break.
- Maize crops in the region continue to look very good, with some already having been cut while others are on track for a good harvest.
- The last of the irrigated lucerne cuts for hay are ongoing for some dedicated growers before a silage cut, with curing conditions for the hay reportedly producing some good bales.
- The dry conditions continue to drive some demand both locally and down into the south west of the state. It has been a good season for hay production, so supply is available, but a number of mixed producers are looking at the forecast and keeping additional supply on hand. Vetch and oaten hay, as well as good quality lucerne seems to be moving quite well, as well as some lower grade cereal and pasture hay.
- Some change to pricing this week.

- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$255 to \$315/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$340 to \$410/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +5 (\$90 to \$120/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: -5 (\$240 to \$300/t). Prices decrease this week.

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Gippsland

- Little to no rainfall across the region this week with isolated falls of less than 5mm of rain falling in the far east and far west, but the majority of the area saw no rain fall this week. Temperatures are continuing to trend above average.
- Pastures in the region, especially in the west and central parts have degraded after another low rainfall week, with little that is dryland showing any green availability. Fodder crops are still green but most of these summer crops have been consumed with dairy and livestock herds now being fed out silage and hay.
- Irrigated lucerne stands are still producing hay in the region, though comments suggest most are on to their last cut.
- Winter ryegrass is being sown in the region though many farmers are still completing preparation work before the seeding commences.
- Enquiries are continuing to lift in the region with the dry conditions driving some buying in preparation for winter. On-farm stores are still very good with many mixed enterprises having a fair amount of conserved fodder available. South west Victoria is still driving some demand.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +5 (\$240 to \$330/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +15 (\$350 to \$430/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +5 (\$90 to \$135/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: -5 (\$220 to \$270/t). Prices decrease this week.

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Southwest Victoria

- Another low rainfall week this week, with falls of between 1mm and 5mm falling in some coastal areas, but the remainder of the region saw no rainfall. Cloudy days and temperatures in the mid 20's.

- The region remains brown and dry even with sporadic rainfall in some areas. The rain has not been sufficient to bolster any green pick and all dryland pastures are only offering dry feed options. These dryland pastures are now beginning to show large cracks as subsoil moisture reduces and soils contract.
- Newly sown irrigated pastures sown at the beginning of March and under rotational watering are showing some good green emergence, but it will be middle or late April before the pastures can be grazed. Dry sown pastures are looking for some rain to start the growth cycle.
- Some growers in the north of the region are also beginning to sow in the next cereal crops with wheat crops going into dry ground with the prospect of some rain over the Easter period.
- Enquiries in the region are stable but high as pastures continue to dry out. Hay is being brought into the region from both intrastate and from across the borders of SA and NSW to meet demand. 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: +/-0 (\$350 to \$410/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$90 to \$110/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +5 (\$200 to \$250/t). Prices increase this week.

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Southeast South Australia

- Little to no rain fell in the region this week, with the southern coastal tips recording between 1mm and 5mm of rain, but the remainder of the region was dry. Warm and windy conditions persist throughout the area.
- With continued dry conditions there is very little green pick available from dryland pastures, though dry feed is still in good supply. Irrigated pastures continue to provide some green feed, but herds are being fed out supplementary feed.
- Lucerne hay production is continuing for dedicated growers whose production was delayed earlier in the year. However, most growers are on their last cuts and for some seed harvest is being undertaken.
- Ground preparation for the next sowing season is continuing, growers are hoping for an autumn break rather than having to dry sow.
- Enquiries remain fairly steady in the region with livestock and dairy farmers looking to secure supply into late autumn and winter. While hay sheds appear to still have plenty of supply, comments suggest that quite a bit of hay has been contracted. Hay is moving to dairy farms near the Victorian border and over into southwest 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: +13 (\$230 to \$270/t). Prices increase this week.

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Central South Australia

- Little to no rain fell across the region this week, though the more northern parts of the state did see some decent falls. Most days were clear and dry with a few overcast periods.
- The rainfall that fell two weeks ago does appear to have sparked some small regrowth in pastures that had enough subsoil moisture to keep deep rooted species active, however this is very sporadic and most dryland is only supplying dry feed. Fodder continues to be fed out to herds in the region, even those with access to irrigated pastures.
- Comments suggest that dedicated growers of lucerne are on their last cuts, and some are harvesting seed.
- Growers are in the process of preparing the ground for the next sowing season and while the conditions are still very dry, many are attempting to have the ground ready to go in front of any reasonable forecast rain.
- Enquiries remain steady as dry conditions continue, and pasture feed becomes less viable. Enquiries from both the domestic and export markets are stable but fairly robust which is seeing an increase of hay moving through the state.
- No 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 remain steady this week.
- Straw: +3 (\$90 to \$105/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Southwest Western Australia

- Another week of no rainfall across most of the region, though very light falls in some eastern coastal areas of less than 5mm of rain. Temperatures continue to be high.
- Due to the continuing low or no rainfall in the southern parts of region, pastures remain dry and are only offering dry feed. Fodder continues to be fed out to local cattle, sheep and dairy herds and water is also being carted for animal use.
- Some cows in the region have started autumn calving which is placing additional strain on available feed to keep lactating cows and therefore calves in good health.

- Sheep from the south west continue to be agisted in eastern parts of the region that have seen good rainfall over the last few weeks and have available pasture growth to support the flocks. This will cease soon as seeding will commence.
- Even with the very dry conditions, ground preparation work continues in the south west to have the ground ready for when the rain arrives. Nitrogen is being applied on paddocks slated for oats and remaining summer weed removal is also being undertaken.
- Enquiries in the region remain fairly steady as the low availability of good pasture feed, due to the dry conditions, are driving demand and farmers are hand feeding stock. Livestock producers are sourcing varied fodder options to keep up herd health, and there are some reports of scarcity in fodder lines.
- Some change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: +5 (\$300 to \$360/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: +10 (\$220 to \$270/t). Prices increase this week.

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Northwest Tasmania

- Another week of light falls in the region after a long dry period. Average rainfall in the area was between 10mm to 20mm of rain, with inland receiving higher falls. Temperatures are still above average for this time of year.
- Another week of light rainfall is lifting the optimism of some producers in the region but it will still be a while before the rain sparks any substantial green pick, so dry feed is continuing to be the main dryland pasture feed option, supplemented by fodder.
- Irrigated pastures, as well as dedicated fodder crops, in the region remain green and have benefited from the warmer days to keep the grass and clovers growing.
- Hay production is continuing off irrigated stands and paddocks, with the mostly clear dry days aiding with curing. Given the reduction in pasture feed these fodder supplies are moving fast.
- Enquiries are still elevated due to the dry conditions and the overall reduction in good green feed options. On-farm storage remains reasonable, but dairy and livestock producers are looking to fill stores to prepare for the cooler months ahead as well as supplement the current lessening in green feed. Pasture hay is in high demand.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$245 to \$320/t) Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$300 to \$380/t) Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$85 to \$120/t) Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +20 (\$275 to \$355/t) Prices increase this week.

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