

# Hay Report

8 March 2024

DELIVERING  
*for* DAIRY



# Contents

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<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Driving Prices Up .....	3
Driving Prices Down.....	3
Local News.....	3
<b>Regional commentary .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Atherton Tablelands.....	4
Darling Downs .....	4
North Coast NSW.....	5
Central West NSW .....	6
Bega Valley .....	7
Goulburn/Murray Valley .....	7
Gippsland.....	8
Southwest Victoria .....	9
Southeast South Australia .....	9
Central South Australia .....	10
Southwest Western Australia.....	11
Northwest Tasmania .....	11



# Summary

## Driving Prices Up

- Though the wheatbelt in Western Australia (WA) has seen some good rain over the last two weeks, the south west area is still very dry with very limited rainfall furthering the degradation of dry feed and requiring additional fodder supplies to keep herds healthy.
- Dry conditions continue in the south west of Victoria as well as South Australia. This late summer is seeing a drying off of available pastures and the push from dairy and livestock producers to ensure good quality supply heading into autumn and winter.
- Exporters remain a player in the marketplace continuing to provide a baseline price for a wide range of cereal fodder supplies.

## 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.
- Some lines of fodder are seeing a reduction in cost at the lower end of the quality scale which is bringing down the overall pricing point. Some growers are also finding a market for some weather damage hay which had been stored unprotected outside.
- 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 constraints.

## Local News

- Tasmania looks to be having a fairly good season this year, while rainfall is lower than usual in the north east, pastures are offering good opportunistic fodder production to build up additional stock from both dedicated producers and mixed farming enterprises for on-farm usage.
- Pressure from the continued dry conditions and live export market in WA is weighing on plans of many sheep graziers, with reduced numbers expected to flow through to effect fodder demand.
- 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. We are expected to return to neutral El Niño–Southern Oscillation levels in the southern hemisphere 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 Atherton tablelands continue to see damp conditions, and although the weekend did see a break from the rain, Atherton recorded 15mm of rain this week.
- The region remains green with warm temperatures and rain continuing to boost the grass along and providing plenty of feed to herds in the region.
- Some sporadic hay cutting and production took place over the weekend with a few clear days enabling the cutting of some overdue pastures. However, most of this hay is of medium to low quality and there was follow up rain for some cut hay which has caused damage to the windrowed cuts.
- The weekend saw some grass seed harvest undertaken, with growers taking any opportunity available to get on to the paddocks.
- Conditions have remained too wet in the region to allow for spraying of crops for weed and pest mitigation efforts. There is some concern that if the ongoing damp conditions continue there will be a marked decrease in yield for some legume and peanut crops.
- Fall army worm incursion continue to be reported in increasing frequency in the region in corn and sorghum crops.
- 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.
- No change to pricing this week as green feed availability continues to meet many producer needs. Demand remains steady from exporters and feedlots who continue to have a steady turnover of fodder requirements. Some slight uptick of trucks moving hay in the region is being reported.
- 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

- Light to moderate rainfall was widespread across the region this week, with falls of between 10mm and 25mm of rain, though most fell on one or two days with the remainder of the week being clear and dry.
- Pastures remain green in the region, with timely rainfall as well as late summer warmth keeping the pastures moving along and providing green feed options for livestock and dairy herds.
- Maize crops in the region are being cut for silage, which is adding to the availability of feed options. Summer crops of millet and sorghum are being cut after having supplied some good early grazing opportunities.

- The ongoing summer rainfall after the high rainfall totals in December and January appears to be setting growers up for a good autumn seeding season. However comments indicate that even with the current subsoil moisture consistent falls will be needed over the coming months to keep this on track.
- Fall army worm incursions continue to be reported in higher numbers as the season progresses, with mitigation activities continuing, monitoring of crops even after heads have emerged is recommended as the pest load this season is unusually high and widespread.
- Enquiries remain low in the region, with the continued availability of pastures as well as scheduled and opportunistic fodder production keeping demand requirements fairly stable. Some uptick in enquiries for lucerne is being met locally, and roughage supplies continue to be replenished.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$230 to \$300/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: -5 (\$350 to \$400/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Straw: -5 (\$75 to \$90/t). Prices decrease 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, and Grafton reporting 50mm of rain, though almost all of that fell on a single day.
- Pastures in the region continue to respond well to the seasonal conditions with quality grazing feed readily available to support grazing stock.
- Growers in the region had been baling grass and millet for silage during the drier period at the start of the week, additional cutting and baling is now on hold due to the rain but is expected to pick up again next week.
- Ground preparation is continuing for autumn sowing schedules, with summer weeds still presenting problems for some growers. Recent wet conditions have delayed some mitigation efforts along coastal properties.
- Sorghum crops in the region are showing excellent growth and potential and are on track for a high yielding harvest, some earlier sown sorghum is already coming off, with growers very happy with quality.
- Enquiries continue to be fairly low, with minimal amounts of hay moving locally. Good green feed availability as well as conserved on-farm fodder supplies are meeting most livestock needs. Feedlots are still purchasing supplies.
- Some change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$260 to \$330/t). Prices remain steady 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: -10 (\$240 to \$300/t). Prices decrease this week.

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## Central West NSW

- Widespread falls across the region this week, with the north and south seeing the lowest falls of around 5mm of rain, while the central parts saw upwards of 20mm of rain across large areas. Most days remained fairly dry with the rain falling in bursts.
- Light rainfall across the region this week has kept pastures green, with the earlier evidence of some drying having been reversed or held. Flocks and herds in the region are being fairly well supplied from available pastures with some supplemental roughage.
- Hay production is continuing in the region, with the season somewhat extended with summer putting on a later showing. Lucerne and speciality hay supplies have been coming off well. Comments suggest the season has been good in the area for the number of cuts, but quality has been varied.
- Cotton crops in the north of the region are beginning to show consistent open cotton bolls for anything sown in spring, growers are preparing for final irrigation and defoliation before harvest, with the abundance of crops looking to bring in a good cottonseed supply.
- There has been some early corn harvest in the far north of the region, but most crops are still expected to be one to two weeks away from cutting.
- Growers and farmers continue to bait mice to keep them under control around shedding and paddocks, numbers are not high but the pests are being reported in the region.
- Enquiries are steady but low as pastures continue to provide for local herds. However an extended dry period may see that change. Protein and cereal hay continues to be in some demand.
- Some change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$240 to \$315/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: -5 (\$340 to \$400/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$70 to \$100/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: -10 (\$260 to \$300/t). Prices decrease this week.

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## Bega Valley

- Very low rainfall across the region this week, with only the northern parts of the area seeing falls of around 5mm of rain. The remainder of the region saw no rain this week, clear and sunny conditions persist.
- While rainfall totals have been low this week, it has been enough to keep pastures green and provide green feed opportunities to local dairy and livestock herds.
- Corn crops continue to be chopped for silage, with this being ensiled on local dairy farms against the next feed shortage. Currently dairy farms in the region are being well serviced by available pasture feed and so will be storing this excess for later needs.
- Preparation work is underway for the next season, with ground work being undertaken. Good rain has set the growers up well for the start of the season with plenty of potential.
- Enquiries remain steady but subdued in the region, with the continued good green feed availability and silage production providing a buffer for livestock producers. Cereal hay continues to be sought and purchased as well as some high protein lines.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$240 to \$320/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$360 to \$390/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$80 to \$100/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$260 to \$330/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## Goulburn/Murray Valley

- No rain fell in the region this week. Dry, warm conditions throughout the area, with temperatures trending above average for this time of year.
- The continuing dry conditions have seen further deterioration in pasture growth. There is still a fair amount of subsoil moisture to draw from, but anything shallow rooted is showing moisture stress. Irrigated pastures are growing very well. There is still good feed availability but rain would be welcomed.
- Lucerne continues to be cut and baled in the region, with comments suggesting the cuts are coming off green and sweet, with good leaf quality. While the warm days require cutting to take place at night to keep the moisture, the conditions are very good for curing the cuts and producing excellent hay.
- Summer crops continue to do well by drawing down on the high subsoil moisture, but some additional rain is needed by any dryland crops. Corn is starting to be cut for silage.
- The drying conditions do have an upside in helping to mitigate some summer weeds which had been flourishing due to the wet summer. Growers are working to get these under control.

- The continuing dry conditions have seen some more enquiries for securing hay supplies with more trucks being seen in the region carting hay. Green feed is still available and most farms have reasonable on-farm stores, but producers are looking to winter and are locking in some parcels now.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$255 to \$315/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$340 to \$390/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$90 to \$100/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$250 to \$320/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## Gippsland

- Almost no rain fell in the region this week, with only isolated and very low falls of less than 5mm being recorded in the east. Warm and sunny conditions continue.
- Another dry week is beginning to see a turnaround in the green feed viability of dryland pastures in the region, with moisture stress becoming more apparent. Grass is still available, but growth has slowed and more pastures are beginning to dry out.
- Grass silage continues to be cut and baled in the east of the region, with a fair amount being made by livestock and dairy farmers for use on-farm. Pits which had been opened during the dry period are now being refilled.
- Irrigated lucerne and pastures continue to roll through summer cutting schedules due to the late summer conditions extending the normal windows. However a number of dedicated hay producers are now looking more towards sowing for the next winter crop.
- Corn crops in the east of the region are coming along very well, with full height and cobs filling out. With the milder early summer these crops will be cut for silage later in the month.
- Enquiries in the region have lifted a little this week, though there is still green feed and an abundance of on-farm fodder stored, but some local farmers are planning for winter. The south west of Victoria is continuing to drive demand as dairy and livestock producers look to lock in some fodder supplies as the area sees more drying conditions.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$240 to \$320/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$330 to \$400/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$90 to \$105/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$240 to \$280/t). Prices remain steady this week.



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## **Southwest Victoria**

- Another week of no rainfall recorded in the region. Conditions remain hot and windy, with fire restrictions in place.
- The region is looking quite dry after another week of no significant rainfall. Dryland pastures still have some green pick available, but rain is needed to keep this feed going, if it was to become dry, feed could quickly burn off putting pressure on local farmers.
- Some growers are indicating the dry conditions are seeing an increase in pasture predation by animals such as kangaroos that are looking for easier feed options.
- Autumn calving is beginning in the region for those dairy farmers that follow that schedule.
- Dryland forage crops in the region continue to show moisture stress and growth has stalled. Growers are looking for rain to push along the growth cycle. Irrigated crops however are still looking good.
- Enquiries are fairly steady in the region as the dry conditions continue. Livestock and dairy farmers are locking in fodder options for late autumn and winter, with not just hay and silage being brought in but also feed grains and legumes as well as almond hulls. Vetch appears to be in some demand.
- Some change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$260 to \$330/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +5 (\$330 to \$400/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$90 to \$100/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$190 to \$250/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## **Southeast South Australia**

- Another week of dry and warm conditions in the region, with no rainfall recorded in the area and high winds reported.
- Pastures are quite brown with very little green to be seen, though there is plenty of dry feed available. Irrigated fodder crops are still providing feed opportunities to herds in the region, but fodder is being fed out to herds, and water is being carted in some areas.
- Hay producers in the region are reportedly having some issues sourcing oat seed varieties for the next sowing season.

- Straw baling has now finished in the region. Comments suggest there has been a fair amount of interest in straw from specialty farms, feedlots and pellet makers.
- Growers in the region have moved to maintenance and ground preparation for the next sowing season. Comments indicate that fleabane continues to be a weed of some concern with strong mitigation efforts to control the pest species.
- Enquiries remain slow but steady in the region as the ongoing 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 marketplace to meet specific needs. Some shipments are still moving 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: -5 (\$190 to \$265/t). Prices decrease this week.

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## Central South Australia

- The dry conditions continue again this week, with some low rainfall recorded only in the very far north. Sunny and clear days for most of the week, high winds have also been recorded.
- Continuing lack of rain in the region is impacting the availability of feed and only irrigated land is offering any green feed. Dry feed is in reasonable supply and fodder continues to be fed out. Some water carting is also being reported.
- Cutting and baling of lucerne hay around Langhorne Creek is moving ahead once again as conditions become more conducive to producing some good quality bales. Most producers are running balers in the evening to ensure good moisture levels.
- 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.
- Growers in the region are looking for some rain in anticipation for the coming cropping season.
- Enquiries remain steady as the dry period extends and available green pasture feed dries off. Exporters continue to make enquiries for additional cereal hay, and local demand 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: +/-0 (\$320 to \$390/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$90 to \$100/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## **Southwest Western Australia**

- Rain fell in the region this week; however, the falls were minimal in the south west, with averages of between 1mm and 5mm of rain. The wheatbelt did see another week of reasonable falls, but this has not yet extended down into the south west.
- Minimal rainfall in the region is continuing to have an adverse effect on the quality and sustainability of the available dry feed, while not providing enough moisture to see any spark of new growth. Fodder continues to be fed out to local livestock and dairy herds, though kikuyu grass is still available in areas that have seen rainfall.
- The moderate to heavy rainfall for another week in the northern parts of the region and into the wheatbelt is giving growers in that area a boost in preparation for the upcoming cropping season.
- Ground preparation for the next season is continuing in the region, with producers spraying out weeds and conditioning the soil to be ready when the rain arrives.
- Enquiries remain high in the region, as the low availability of good pasture feed is driving the increased demand. Livestock producers are locking in feed for the autumn and winter.
- Some change to prices this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$300 to \$340/t). Prices remain steady 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: -5 (\$200 to \$270/t). Prices decrease this week.

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## **Northwest Tasmania**

- Light fall across the region this week, with the North West seeing an average of 5mm to 10mm of rain, though inland parts and the western coastal areas did see between 15mm and 20mm of rain. Most days were clear and dry, though temperatures have cooled this week.
- Pastures in the region continue to provide good green feed, but another low rainfall week is seeing further evidence of drying, however this is only in isolated pockets and the majority of the region remains green.
- Scheduled summer fodder production is slowing down as temperatures fall, with the growth of lucerne having slowed significantly. However, pasture hay production is continuing, with comments suggesting that the pastures around Smithton are producing good tight bales.



- Grain harvest is moving through parts of the region this week with wheat coming off the fields and straw production commencing.
- Enquiries remain moderate as low rainfall has seen some early evidence of drying, though most pastures are still providing good green feed. Local demand is from larger dairy farms looking to ensure available supply to supplement pastures. New season fodder looks to be moving fairly well, with dairy farmers seeking good parcels.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -5 (\$245 to \$290/t) Prices decrease 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: +/-0 (\$225 to \$295/t) Prices remain steady this week.

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Australian Fodder Industry Association

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