



Saskatchewan Hay & Pasture Report

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Note from the Saskatchewan Forage Council

Already - the final issue of the *Saskatchewan Hay & Pasture Report* for 2011. Time certainly has flown by this summer. The beautiful fall weather of late seems to be helping farmers and ranchers finish up with harvest and get to fall projects in preparation for winter. Reports from around the province seem to indicate that hay yields were good to excellent in most regions with quality being good as well. You will find plenty of details on regional forage conditions in this issue. In addition, this issue of the *Saskatchewan Hay & Pasture Report* presents articles on valuing crop residue, re-establishing alfalfa into existing grass stands, forage reports from both Manitoba and Alberta and the usual market information.

As always, we welcome your feedback and encourage anyone interested in being placed on our email distribution list to contact the SFC at office@saskforage.ca. You may also want to visit our website www.saskforage.ca for regular news and information related to the forage industry.

Saskatchewan Agriculture Crop Report (for period ending October 3, 2011)

Southeastern Saskatchewan: *Week ending October 3, 2011*

A warm and clear week allowed combines to keep rolling. Ninety-seven per cent of the crop has been combined. On hay land and pasture, topsoil moisture is rated as three per cent surplus, 64 per cent adequate, 30 per cent short and three per cent very short. Although much of the southeastern region started out extremely wet this spring, many crop reporters have indicated conditions are dry in some areas and a rain would be beneficial, especially on pasture land. Producers are busy harvesting, controlling weeds, baling straw, hauling bales and cleaning corrals.

Southwestern Saskatchewan: *Week ending October 3, 2011*

Continued dry conditions have allowed producers to get the majority of the crop in the bin. Ninety-seven per cent of the crop has been combined. On hay land and pasture, topsoil moisture is rated as 36 per cent adequate, 49 per cent short and 15 per cent very short. In many areas, 40 per cent or more of the topsoil is short of moisture. Most reporters have indicated rain is needed. Producers are busy finishing up harvest, controlling weeds, hauling bales and baling straw.

East-Central Saskatchewan***Week ending October 3, 2011***

Ninety-eight per cent of the 2011 crop is in the bin. On hay land and pasture, topsoil moisture is rated as one per cent surplus, 65 per cent adequate, 27 per cent short and seven per cent very short. Crop District (CD) 6A is reporting 53 per cent short of topsoil moisture on hay land and pasture. Many areas, particularly in CD 6A, have not received significant amounts of rain since the last week in July. Farmers are busy harvesting, controlling weeds, cultivating ruts in the field, baling straw, hauling bales and getting ready to apply fall fertilizer.

West-Central Saskatchewan***Week ending October 3, 2011***

Very little rain in the region resulted in good harvest progress and allowed many producers to finish harvest. Ninety-eight per cent of the 2011 crop has been combined. Some areas reported rain showers, amounting to no more than 6 mm. On hay land and pasture, topsoil moisture is rated as 29 per cent adequate, 58 per cent short and 13 per cent very short. Many crop reporters have indicated a good rain is needed to help recharge the soil. The week of July 25 was the last time a significant amount of rain fell. Cattle are starting to come home from community pastures. Producers are busy harvesting, hauling bales and controlling weeds.

Northeastern Saskatchewan***Week ending October 3, 2011***

With 98 per cent of the crop in the bin, harvest is wrapping up in the region. A few spotty rain showers were reported during the week. Clover and alfalfa crops are being harvested. On hay land and pasture, topsoil moisture is rated 44 per cent adequate, 44 per cent short and 12 per cent very short. Precipitation prior to freeze-up is needed. Producers are busy finishing harvest, controlling weeds and hauling bales.

Northwestern Saskatchewan***Week ending October 3, 2011***

Combines continued to roll in the region and producers now have 96 per cent of the crop harvested. Some areas experienced a few spotty rain showers, but the precipitation amounted to less than 4 mm. On hay land and pasture, topsoil moisture is rated as 41 per cent adequate, 40 per cent short and 19 per cent very short. Moisture is needed in many areas, and some RMs have banned open fires due to the dry conditions. Farmers are busy finishing harvest, hauling bales, cleaning corrals and controlling weeds.

Estimated Saskatchewan hay crop yields by region, 2011*

Region	<i>Dryland</i>				<i>Irrigated</i>		
	Alfalfa	Alfalfa Grass	Greenfeed	Other tame hay	Alfalfa	Alfalfa grass	Greenfeed
SE	2.1	2.1	-	1.8	-	-	-
SW	1.9	2.1	2.2	1.8	3	-	-
EC	1.9	1.9	2.4	1.9	-	-	-
WC	2.0	1.8	2.2	1.5	2.4	2.5	3.3
NE	2.1	2.0	3.4	1.7	-	-	-
NW	1.4	1.3	1.8	1.1	-	-	-
Provincial average**	1.9	1.9	2.2	-	2.9	2.9	3.4

*Based on Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture Crop Report for period August 9-15, 2011.

**Long-term average (2006-2010) as reported by Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture Crop Report

SK Regional Forage Conditions - 2011

Compiled by the Saskatchewan Forage Council

Southeastern Saskatchewan

Forage growing conditions were excellent this year where excess moisture did not result in flooding. Hay yields - estimate 33-50% above average with hay quality likely somewhat lower due to high yields (nutrients diluted due to excess moisture). Hay quality should be good considering most was baled without rain after cutting. Pasture conditions in the south east are generally good with some pastures having year long deferral due to an abundance of forage and reduced livestock numbers to graze them. Hay supply for most producers is very good. Due to the abundance of hay in the area, hay prices are lower than average. If packaged in large squares, there are reports of \$85-100/ton in the yard in Saskatchewan with delivery to Texas. Other feeds - certainly a shortage of straw. No abundance of annuals with many of the annuals seeded late and attacked by leaf disease. The frost mid-September forced some late annual acres to be harvested as greenfeed.



Photo Credit: Don Fontaine

South-Central Saskatchewan

Hay yields around Moose Jaw ranged from 150 to 200% of normal. Some areas reported reduced hay yields but overall yields were better than average for most of the region. Quality was certainly improved in the region this year as compared to 2010 as hay crops came off in a timely manner and most saw no rain. Due to high yields, supplies in the area will be good. Pastures held up well throughout the season. Rains stopped for the most part in July but most producers in the region are used to this and tailor pasture management around this moisture regime. Straw always seems to be in short supply for this region and this year will likely show no difference. Hay prices seem below average for the most part mostly due to oversupplies. Demand from the US appears to be pushing up prices of large square bales.

Southwestern Saskatchewan

Southwest Saskatchewan experienced record high forage yields this summer. The area went into the fall of 2010 with very good soil moisture and the spring of 2011 also had abundant soil moisture conditions, resulting in record high production on most farms. Reports indicate that hay yields were 2-3 times the average production for the area. Most producers put their hay up with very minimal rainfall on the cut feed, as drier weather prevailed through most of the haying season. Some producers made the conscious decision to cut their hay earlier than last year, as they did not want to produce the same poor quality feed that was put up in 2010. Due to the large hay crop this year, and a good hay crop in 2010, there is a large excess of hay in the region. This is a very unusual situation for southwest Saskatchewan. Due to this excess, forage prices are very depressed and at this point in the season very little hay has been sold.

Pasture conditions are very good with lots of litter carryover for next year. As long as the snow stays away, cattle will be grazing as late as possible due to the good carryover on pastures. It appears that less annual crop acres were harvested as greenfeed/swath grazing this year, as producers were more inclined to harvest these annual crops for grain due to strong grain prices.

West-Central Saskatchewan

Forage growing conditions were generally good in the region this year with adequate moisture for most of the season. Areas close to Kindersley did not experience excess moisture but seemed to receive just enough and at the right times. Other areas within the region received higher precipitation amounts. In the northwest part of the region, (Macklin, Denzil, Unity and Kerrobert) the spring was quite dry. However rains came and relieved this dry period.

Reports indicate that hay yields are generally good and are likely well above average with the drier areas at or slightly below average. Although there were some showers during haying season, most of the hay was put up in good to excellent condition. Above average hay yields in 2011 has resulted in an abundant supply of mostly good quality hay. This coupled with carry-over from the 2010 season has put down-ward pressure on hay prices. There does not appear to be much hay trading in the area, thus prices are difficult to establish at this time, but the expectation is that prices will be lower than average.

Pasture conditions were generally good during the 2011 growing season. There were good and timely rains coupled with warm growing conditions throughout most of the summer. During late summer and fall the rains stopped. This allowed for excellent grain harvesting conditions but native pastures browned off and stopped growing. However adequate growth from earlier in the season allowed pasture conditions to remain good. During late summer and fall growth also slowed on tame pastures. Producers will likely be removing cattle from their summer pastures in the next few weeks, which is mostly in line with their usual schedule. Water and dugout levels seemed to have been adequate for the 2011 season.

There appears to be ample supply of other feed sources. The west central area had a good cereal crop which is mostly harvested now resulting in a good supply of straw. This fall's harvest went very well with most of the grain coming off in good to excellent quality. There was a killing frost in mid-September which may have reduce grain grades a bit, but not enough to move these grains to the feed market. Due to the high yield of grain crops, grain bags or piles on the ground are a common site in the area. If we get inclement weather this fall, grain stored on the ground may be diverted into the feed market.

Central Saskatchewan

Things are close to completely wrapped up in the Watrous region. Most fields are empty except for some hay bales that have yet to be transported. Growing conditions this year were good with the first frost on September 7, 2011. However, it did not appear to be a severe frost as some vegetation continued growing. Reports indicate that hay quality is good to excellent with average or above average yields. There should be plenty of feed going into the winter feeding period. Also, due to good grain yields in the area straw does not seem to be in short supply. Pastures in the area appear to be in good shape. Livestock are now starting their fall/winter grazing schedule with stockpile grazing being a common practice for this time of year.

East-Central Saskatchewan

What started off as a cool, wet spring turned into a warm, dry summer resulting in most forage producers being able to put up good to excellent quality feed in ample supply. There are pockets in the east-central region (south and east of Yorkton), where spring flooding created some weed and salinity issues in hay and pasture stands. North of Canora, moisture was much less abundant and they welcomed any spring and early summer moisture.

Hay yields are estimated at average to slightly above-average as the cool spring delayed plant development and maturity. For the amount of moisture and warm summer weather the region experienced, many producers were expecting better yields. There may also be some challenges with feed quality as nutrients could be diluted due to excessive moisture.

Cattle were placed onto pastures slightly later than normal as growth was delayed this spring. Most pastures appear to be in good shape going into the fall with the exception of those in the extremely wet areas where flooding has affected production. Regrowth has been limited on some pastures (west of Yorkton) where there was little rain from July through September.

Greenfeed crops were seeded late (late June-early July) on many of the acres that were too wet to seed to other crops. Diseases were prevalent in these crops, particularly rust in oats, which decreased forage yield. Overall, the east-central region should have enough forage to maintain the cattle herd over the winter with some producers looking to sell their excess. As there does not appear to be a shortage of feed, forage prices are expected to be relatively low - 1.5 to 2 cents per pound (\$33-\$44/ton) however at the present time there is little forage trading.

Northeastern Saskatchewan

The summer of 2011 was reasonably good to hay producers in northeast Saskatchewan. Good growing conditions resulted in an above average hay crop. The crop generally came off in good condition with only a few scattered showers during haying. Regrowth on alfalfa fields was good and a number of producers took second cuts.

Pasture conditions across the northeast were good. Surface water sites have adequate supplies. There is ample straw and most producers are in the process of hauling hay and straw home. Most livestock producers will have adequate hay and straw supplies so local demand is relatively low. Going into fall, hay prices are anticipated to be slightly below the long term average for the area.

North-Central Saskatchewan

Forage yields in the region were above average again this year with yields of 1.75 to 2 tons per acre reported. Pasture conditions were good to excellent generally with ample moisture to keep forages growing throughout the season. Some producers reported flooded areas in both pasture and hay land especially on the east side of the region due to excess moisture received in the early part of the season.

Producers struggled again this year to put up quality hay. However, in spite of some rains on cut hay, the majority of producers were able to put up quality hay as the season progressed. Reports also indicate that there is ample straw in the region to supply the cattle herds.

Northwestern Saskatchewan

Growing conditions have been good this year due to adequate to good rains in the area. Reports indicate that hay yields are above average for the most part (frost in late May did reduce yields on many alfalfa fields) with some excellent yield pockets in the area. Hay quality appears to be much better than last year. Most of the hay is good to excellent except for areas around Goodsoil and Meadow Lake where quality is 50% good and 50% poor (due to rain during haying). Pasture conditions have been good to excellent throughout the year as well.

Hay prices are somewhat difficult to determine as little is moving at this time, but are expected to be 20 - 25% less than long term prices for average quality beef hay. Hay growers are using delivery and quality as key negotiating ploys. Hay buyers are watching quality and weight of bales closely, thus poor quality hay will be tough to move.

Supply of hay in the area is estimated as above average, but the winter of 2010/2011 did not allow for much carry-over hay due to many cold periods which extended longer than normal. There were some excellent yields of annual crops in the area and barley was taken off at good quality. Straw is becoming more difficult to source, but there should be opportunities to bring straw in where needed.

Manitoba Forage Report - 2011

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Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives

Hay

A repeat from 2009 and 2010, this year's hay harvest had its challenges. The year started off very wet, with overland flooding in many parts of the province - the most affected being the Southwest, Westlake and Interlake areas. However, most of the province did not receive any rain after June, leaving the second cut short. The dry weather did make for good harvesting conditions and better quality feed. The extended fall has been welcomed by many, giving the producers another opportunity for a good final cut of the year. Much of the greenfeed in Manitoba was affected to a varying degree by a mid-September frost - not typically an issue except in years like 2011 when the majority of greenfeed crops were seeded in early to mid-July. Final cuts are still taking place, and producers are testing for nitrates.

The **Eastern** region probably fared the best with good spring and summer conditions. Tame hay yields were average with above average quality as well. Final cuts are still being taken, with a positive outlook on quality. The **Southwest** region experienced significant flooding and saw up to a quarter of the tame hay acres remain under water for the entire season. The remainder were harvested late, resulting

in some crops yielding well above average for first cut. Combined with a dry summer, second harvest was delayed to September or early October with below average yields. Native hay harvests in the area were above average on accessible stands, and well below average on flooded fields. Tame yields in the **Northwest** ranged from 50-100% of normal due to extremely wet conditions, especially in the eastern areas near Lake Manitoba. Overland flooding in the region has left bales standing in water and native hay stands inaccessible for the second year in a row - many of these stands will not recover. Local straw production is also below average. Similarly, the **Interlake** region also experienced significant overland flooding for the second year in row. Yields here range from normal on higher ground to less than 50% of normal in low lying areas, with field access still limited. The hardest hit area in the Interlake was the southwest (Shoal Lakes) due to overland flooding. Tame hay yields in the **Central** region were average with average to slightly above average quality; but third cuts are beginning where growth warrants, with positive outlooks on quality.



Manitoba "hay field" west of Lake Manitoba. Note the bales from last year among the cat-tails.

Photo Credit: Glenn Friesen.

Hay trade doesn't begin in earnest until December/January. Initial prices are generally above average ranging from \$0.025 to \$0.035/lb (\$55-77/ton) at the stack for low to medium quality hay, and \$0.05 to \$0.065/lb (\$110-143/ton) for high quality dairy hay, but prices for high quality hay are expected to rise over the feeding period. Some higher priced hay is moving into the US dairy industry.

Green feed acres in 2011 were nearly three times normal levels. Yields are reported as average to below average due to delayed seeding and very dry growing conditions. Much of the greenfeed will be tested for nitrates this fall given the multiple mid-September frosts across most of the province. Corn silage acres may be slightly down due to delayed seeding and silage yields are average around the province.

Feed shortages are a concern in hardest hit areas. Some cattle producers continue to source straw (also in short supply) to stretch feed supplies this winter, or plan to increase cull rates to mitigate feed shortages.

Pastures

Tame pastures are generally too dry and experiencing slow regrowth. Native pastures in low lying areas are flooded for the second year in a row, and will be slow to recover in 2012. Many producers in the regions are beginning to supplement on pasture. Pastures are growing better in the central and eastern regions due to slightly less spring flooding damage; overgrazing is a concern on pastures in all regions. Cattle are moving to stockpiled pastures and/or drier hay fields.

Alberta Forage Reports - 2011

Grant Lastiwka and Barry Yaremico - Forage/Beef Specialists
Calvin Yoder - Forage Specialist, Peace River
Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development

In the spring of 2011 across Alberta, snow fall was slow to melt. Stockpiled grazing was later to start because of this weather. Soil moisture levels were high across much of the province, except in western regions of the Peace region. Heavy frosts (-8 to -10 C) in spring hurt many forage stands in northeastern Alberta. With this injury, forage stands, especially alfalfa growth was slowed. Rain in spring and early summer fell frequently across most of Alberta. The exception was in the northeast, and in the Peace region at the Fort Vermilion area. Both experienced a dry period after snow melt moisture was used up. But by June 15 in the northeast and July 1 at Fort Vermilion rains started and kept coming through July. Rain delayed seeding of swath grazing and haying operations across the province. Those trying to hay had some windows of opportunity but forage that was cut was for the most part rained on. For the second year in a row, plastic wrapping of bales as a means of putting up rained on forage for haylage occurred.

By the third or fourth week of July the weather turned warm/hot. Haying of mature forage was occurring all over Alberta. With hay volume being very good, some haying of first cut continued well through August. In the Peace region, with continuing moist conditions in many areas, producers were completing first cut hay operations in early September.

Reduced cattle numbers allowed some poorer pastures to go ungrazed. For some pastures this may have been their second year untouched. Pasture conditions in the province are rated as 10 per cent poor, 36 per cent fair, 30 per cent good and 24 per

cent excellent as of early September. The majority of the poor pastures are in the northeast region with some in the eastern portion of the south central region. This is due to early spring dry conditions followed by dry conditions into the fall.

Hay fertilization was more common in 2011 as cattle prices allowed for some optimism. In early spring, Alberta had a freight assistance program for the Peace region allowing for cost effective purchases of surplus hay stocks out of central Alberta. Fertilizer prices are rising.

Excessively wet areas were common in much of the south and central Alberta, resulting in acres being not seeded or drowned out after seeding. In some cases, seeded crops resulted in weedy salvage greenfeed or silage crops. Other cleaner stands of late seeded crops that were planted in wet areas for greenfeed are now close to being ripe enough to combine.

The excellent weather in September meant in moister areas a second cut harvested on late July first cut fields. Light (-2 to -3°C) frosts causing crop damage to cereals (and more so to corn) have been reported in various parts of all regions. As of October 6 there are no reports of any hard killing frosts. Forage stands are now very dry in all regions except the Peace where rain continues and in the south under irrigation.

Pests

In spring and again in August there were reports of moderate to over threshold levels of grasshoppers in the Northeast, Northwest and Peace Regions. Damage appeared to be greater in annuals than perennials. Lygus bugs were also a problem in the Peace Region. Weed problems with Canada thistle and absinth wormwood in south central Alberta are quite severe. Generally weeds are on the rise. Although some are due to overgrazing, lack of fertilizer and wet weather seem to be contributors with even well managed stands beginning to show weed concerns. Some ergot appears to again be a problem in some grass stands.



Living in luxury – Summer 2011

Photo credit: Ian Aitken

Winterfeed stocks are high with carryover from 2010 of about 25% in most areas of Alberta. Fewer acres were seeded for silage, greenfeed, and swath grazing than in previous years. Feed supplies appear to be adequate in the previous drought areas of the western Peace region due to a number of factors including the late winter freight assistance program, good winter snows, spring and summer rains and good forage seed field regrowth. Reports indicate 50% of the cow herd is gone from the Peace region after the 2010 drought and years of low beef prices.

Forage yields

Overall hay yields are above average. There were some areas of the province that experienced flooding and water damage which reduced yields of annual forage crops. Late first cut yields were as high as 2.5 tonnes per acre.

Forage quality

Forage hay quality is better than 2010 but is extremely variable. Hay from June and mid-July cuttings was rained on. Most hay was cut after this with no rain damage, but is overly mature. Due to good moisture up to mid-summer, greenfeed and

second cut hay have been coming off in excellent condition. There is some third cut in irrigation areas.

Forage Prices

There are a lot of producers with first cut hay for sale. Asking prices are 2.5-4 cents/pound (\$55-88/ton). Good horse hay is at 4-5 cents/pound (\$99/ton). Projected selling prices will be 2.5 - to 3 cents/pound (\$55-66/ton) for first cut beef hay. Poorer quality hay, or in areas with greater surplus, prices are anticipated estimated at 2 cents per pound. Greenfeed is anticipated to sell for 2.5-3 cents/pound as quality should be excellent. Straw and fertilizer value sets a floor price but an excess of straw has left some free in the swath, occurring with neighbour to neighbour agreements. Second cut hay for the dairy market appears to be selling in the 4-6 cents/pound (\$88-132/ton) range. Some hay from southern Alberta was shipped to North Dakota, pelleted and trucked to dairies in Texas.

Irrigated Alfalfa Seed

Harvest is in progress as of October 6, 2011. Moisture early in the year and hot weather in mid-summer have resulted in very good alfalfa seed production. Yields are a bit above average. Quality is equal or better than average. A hailstorm, near Rosemary, varying in severity, affected about 2,000 acres of alfalfa seed production. Yields of over 1,000 lbs/acre have been reported however a more realistic average of 750 lbs/acre is likely. This results in an average of 600 lbs/acre of cleaned seed.

Export Hay Sales

Organizations are still in the consolidation mode. Some alfalfa from Canada is being exported to the US. Radiation effects in Japan on some beef and dairy animals, plus the Tsunami economic setback caused Japanese consumer loss of confidence in their meat/dairy products and general economic turmoil. As a result there is a reduced Japanese demand for export forage from Canada.

Overall

Acres of annual and perennial forage are dropping as high cereal and oilseed prices are pulling them out of forage production. Cow herd dispersals continue as producers who were waiting for beef prices to come up, or ones with high debt are now getting out. With lower priced hay sales this likely means less fertilizer will be applied on forages this fall or next spring.

Forage Seed Production in the Peace Region

Creeping red fescue seed yields were variable across the region. Overall, fescue acres were down dramatically and yields were below average. Most fescue yields were reported in the 250-400 lb/acre range. Highest yields were in the 700 lb/acre range. Moisture conditions were too dry the previous fall, and even though moisture was above average in June in July, it was too late to help improve yields. There was also cutworm damage on fescue fields west of Spirit River and also to several stands in the BC Peace Region. The showers and wet weather during the first week of July affected pollination. Growers did not report seeing the large clouds of pollen that they normally see, which appears to have caused higher levels of blanks than normal. The excess moisture also caused a number of fields to lodge prior to pollination. Stem eyespot showed up in some second year fields which may also have caused yield loss. Some fields, particularly in the southwest part of the region, fared better, with yields being reported in the 700 lb/acre range. This area received good moisture in 2010, which set some very good yield potential for 2011. Swathing fescue was two weeks later than normal. Harvest was a long drawn out process, as large amounts of material in the swaths, combined with frequent

showers, delayed combining. Fescue acres continue to spiral downwards. There continues to be a lack of interest in growing creeping red fescue at this point in time, which continues to be a concern to the seed trade.

A number of older stands of timothy were affected once again by cutworms this spring, particularly on the east side of the region. The southern areas of the Peace Region received some rain in May and these stands seemed to fair better. Timothy was very late to mature, and the maturity of the plants were very uneven across the fields which made it very difficult to decide when to swath. Majority of the timothy fields have been combined. Most yield reports are in the 250-400 lbs/acre range. Timothy acres, both common and certified, are down considerably.

Smooth brome grass seed yields are all over the map largely depending on age of the stand. Yields are reported anywhere from 75-400 lbs/acre. Newer stands fared better. So far, seed quality appears to be good. Acres of meadow brome grass are down, but yields on some newer stands are reported to be quite good. There were some pastures of meadow brome that were harvested for seed.

As of late September, there were no legume seed crops harvested. Establishment of both red and alsike clover crops was quite good last year. This, combined with the very wet weather in June and July, made for excessive forage growth in the clover crops. It appeared it would be a year where seed set would be extremely poor. However, field inspections in mid to late July revealed that pollination and seed set was excellent in most clover fields, and many more flowers emerged even into late August. Clover crops are extremely late but one would expect some excellent yields as long as they are able to be harvested this fall. With the fields very late to mature there has only been a few alsike clover fields desiccated at this point in time. Alfalfa seed crops do not look good in the central Peace. Excess precipitation and cool temperatures reduced leaf cutting bee activity and pollination.

Overall, this year's turf and forage seed yields in the Peace Region are a mixed bag. All crops were two to three weeks later to harvest because of the wet weather and cool temperatures. Acres of all seed crops are down and there does not appear to be much interest in new seedings at this time, even though prices on most forage seed crops are improving. Although there were few new seedings of turf and forage seed crops those that were seeded have established well.

Seeding Alfalfa into Existing Stands

Saskatchewan Forage Council

The Saskatchewan Forage Council recently completed a project to demonstrate different methods to re-establish alfalfa into existing grass stands. The project included three sites located around Saskatchewan each including five (5) treatments. Treatments were established during the fall of 2009 on pre-existing grass stands with little or no alfalfa present in the stand. Treatments included:

1. broadcast alfalfa with phosphate fertilizer;
2. broadcast alfalfa without phosphate fertilizer;
3. drilled alfalfa with phosphate fertilizer;
4. drilled alfalfa without phosphate fertilizer; and
5. a check.

The Western Beef Development Centre (WBDC) site (Lanigan, SK) saw alfalfa seed drilled/broadcast into a predominately crested wheatgrass pasture using a John Deere 750 No-till drill and a Valmar broadcast applicator.

The Grainland site (Central Butte, SK) saw alfalfa seeded into a predominately crested wheatgrass pasture using a John Deere 750 No-till drill. Drilled treatments were seeded with the drill set to ½" depth and the drill was lifted above the soil surface for the broadcast treatments so that seed was dropped onto the soil surface.

The Moose Creek site (Forget, SK) saw alfalfa seed drilled/broadcast into a predominately meadow bromegrass pasture. Both drilled and broadcast treatments were seeded on November 12, 2009 using a quad mount broadcast seeder and an 8 foot hoe drill with packer wheels.



Alfalfa seedlings at the Moose Creek site in 2011.

Photo credit:
Andre Bonneau

Results

Based on the results from 2010, alfalfa seedling establishment appeared to be delayed at the WBDC site compared to Moose Creek and Grainland. Initial seedling counts in early June of 2010 showed that alfalfa establishment at the WBDC site was less successful than at the other two sites. One consideration may be that grazing pressure at the other two sites was more effective in reducing the existing grass competition compared to the WBDC site. Very wet growing conditions in the spring of 2010 seemed to encourage existing grass re-growth. However, later in the season (August), seedling counts at the WBDC site did increase on both drilled and broadcast treatments.

This demonstration also showed that at the Grainland and Moose Creek sites, drilled alfalfa seeding resulted in higher numbers of alfalfa seedlings compared to broadcast seeding while the opposite effect was seen at the WBDC site. Site supervisors noted that much of the alfalfa that germinated in 2010 at the Grainland site was winterkilled during the winter of 2010/2011. Seedling counts in 2011 were attributed to new seedlings germinated in 2011. Winterkill was also noted to be more of a problem in broadcast treatments at the Moose Creek site when compared to drilled treatments. This may suggest that drilled seeding of alfalfa is preferred for this type of rejuvenation.

Continued evaluation of these three demonstration sites in 2011 showed that alfalfa was indeed establishing at all three sites with the WBDC and Moose Creek sites showing the most promise. Seedling counts at all three sites were greater in 2011 than in 2010 and % alfalfa in each of the three stands also increased in 2011. The trend from 2010 where drilled treatments at both the Grainland and Moose Creek sites resulted in higher seedling counts than in broadcast treatments was also noted in 2011. The WBDC site remained the opposite in 2011 with broadcast treatments resulting in higher seedling counts than the drilled treatments. This result is unexpected as drilled seeding normally results in higher germination due to improved soil to seed contact and better moisture availability over broadcast seeding. However, given that moisture was not limiting in either 2010 or 2011, broadcast seeded alfalfa would not have been lacking moisture to germinate. There did not appear to be a clear effect from fertilizer at these demonstration sites. Seedling counts and forage yield were similar between fertilized and unfertilized treatments at both the WBDC and Grainland sites. At the Moose Creek

site, seedling counts and forage yield were similar between fertility treatments in 2010 however, seedling counts in 2011 were higher on fertilized treatments compared to unfertilized. This result suggests that phosphorous fertilizer may have an extended effect to aid in alfalfa germination.

As mentioned previously, both 2010 and 2011 were above average moisture years, therefore results from these three demonstration sites should be observed with caution. If moisture conditions were more typical during the establishment years for this demonstration, it could be expected that alfalfa germination would have been lower, particularly in the broadcast seeded treatments. Although the Grainland site appears to be the least successful, due to its location in the dry brown soil zone, this result was somewhat expected due to limited moisture availability. However, alfalfa seedlings were establishing at the Grainland site and in the second year were beginning to produce a noticeable portion of the yield particularly for drilled treatments.

Total forage yield at all three sites was not significantly affected by the addition of alfalfa however, as the legume continues to establish, forage yield may also increase. While there was not an apparent effect on forage yield in this short-term project, forage quality was likely enhanced. As the proportion of alfalfa increases in a stand, forage quality is improved.

For complete results and to view a video overview of this project, visit the Saskatchewan Forage Council Website at www.saskforage.ca.

What to Pay for Crop Residue?

Kathy Larson - Beef Economist
Western Beef Development Centre

The Western Beef Development Centre (WBDC) conducts applied research to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of the cow-calf sector in Saskatchewan. Since winter feed is the largest expense in raising beef cows, a large part of WBDC's research focus is on different ways to meet the nutritional requirements of beef cows. One of which is feeding cows crop residues (i.e. straw-chaff or straff). *Straff* is a by-product of crop production that can be part of a balanced ration for dry, pregnant beef cows.

If you are a cattle producer who does not own your own cropland, and are considering renting harvested cropland from a grain-farming neighbour as a winter feed source for your cows, it is always good to have some facts and costs associated with grazing crop residue.

Fact #1: *Letting cows onto cropland will not compact the soil to a point that a crop will not grow the following year.*

A two-year study conducted at Termuende Research Ranch (east of Lanigan, SK) comparing bale grazing, swath grazing and straw-chaff grazing found that wintering beef cows on cropland did not compact soil to any degree of concern. While straw-chaff had the least amount of soil compaction, all feeding sites observed adequate germination and emergence in the following year (Kelln *et al.*, 2007). The stocking density in this study was 114 cow days/acre.

Fact #2: *The cows enable nutrient cycling which can increase crop biomass yield.*

Some estimates are that increased yields can be experienced for up to 8 years after cows winter feed on the land. As the cows consume straff they deposit manure and urine which provides nitrogen and phosphorus available for uptake by the crop in the following year (Kelln et al. 2011; Kelln 2010).

Fact #3: *Crop revenues can usually cover the cost of producing a crop, but still expect to pay something for the straff.*

WBDC has conducted economic analysis on the costs associated with feeding crop residue. An ongoing research project at Termuende Research Ranch involves a diet of straw-chaff piles (oat or pea) with wheat DDGS (dried distillers' grain with solubles) supplementation. Table 1 shows some of the costs associated with this study. A cost of \$0.20-\$0.33/day is a reasonable estimate of the costs to produce crop residue. Bear in mind, this cost estimate does not include salt/mineral, time to check cows, nor the cost for any supplement provided to meet the cows' nutritional requirements; add in another \$0.80-0.90/day to cover those costs.

Based on system costing conducted at the WBDC, a good starting point is in the \$0.20 - \$0.35/day range.

Table 1. Cost Break-down for Straff, per cow per day basis.

Expense	Oat Straff	Pea Straff
Crop Inputs (\$/acre)	\$29.79	\$27.75
Field Passes (\$/acre)	\$64.30	\$64.30
Total Crop Production Costs (\$/acre)	\$94.09	\$92.05
DM Yield (ton/acre)	5.70	4.25
Cost per lb of DM	\$0.008	\$0.011
Feed allocated (lb/cow/day)	21.98	28.76
Cost per cow per day (\$/day)	\$0.18	\$0.31
Repairs & Depreciation	\$0.02	\$0.02
Total Cost (\$/cow/day)	\$0.20	\$0.33

Note: In all WBDC studies, a Whole Buncher (A.J. Manufacturing, Calgary AB) was used to collect and deposit the straff into uniform piles throughout the field.

The rate a cow-calf producer negotiates with a grain producer will be dependent on a number of factors including: the type/amount of crop residue (i.e. oat, pea, etc.), the infrastructure (i.e. fence, water access), lay of the land/shelter (i.e. coulees, trees, portable windbreaks) and labour (i.e. who checks/moves cows). Based on the system costing conducted at WBDC, a good starting point for negotiations would be in the \$0.20-\$0.35 per day range.

For more information, please visit www.wbdc.sk.ca to read Fact Sheets on winter feeding cows with straff. As well, visit the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture's website where there is information on crop residue grazing, see: <http://www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=556dbdfc-8d9a-4e68-8d3d-b9a73a36497d>

References

Kelln, B., B. Lardner, J. Schoenau, and T. King. 2007. "Effect of Winter Feeding Systems on Soil Nutrients, Soil Distribution & Soil Compaction". Western Beef Development Centre Fact Sheet #2007-01. p. 4.

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Kelln, B., H.A. Lardner, J. McKinnon, J. Campbell, D. Damiran, and K. Larson. Forthcoming. Effect of Winter Feeding System on Beef Cow Performance, Reproductive Efficiency and System Cost. *Professional Animal Scientist*.

Nutrient Test Advised Before Using Old Hay

This year's hay is usually a better bet than last year's hay when it comes to feed value, but if quantity is short in some parts of the Prairies this year, buyers may see old hay as an option.

And sellers with lots of old hay may want to move it out to make room for this year's crop.

[Read more...](#)

Saskatchewan Hay Market Report

Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/FeedForageListing

As listed Thursday, October 6, 2011

	Listings	Listings Priced	Tons Listed	Tons Priced	Lowest Price/ton	Highest Price/ton	Weighted Average Price/ton
Alfalfa	20	15	7,987	7,987	\$41	\$90	\$57
Brome/ Alf	34	25	7,565	7,565	\$40	\$67	\$54
Other	2	2	880	880	\$50	\$63	\$51
Straw	2	2	360	360	\$17	\$24	\$21
Organic Hay	1	1	210	210	\$39	\$39	\$39
Organic Green feed	1	1	150	150	\$56	\$56	\$56

USDA Market News Service Hay Report

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) collects a wide variety of information from hay markets across the country. Presented below is information from those jurisdictions closest to Saskatchewan. For complete USDA hay market listings, please visit the [USDA Market News](#) webpage.

Wyoming, Western Nebraska, and Western South Dakota
Weekly Hay Summary (Week ending October 8, 2011)

Dennis Widga, Torrington, WY

www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/to_gr310.txt

Trade and movement fairly active. Demand very good with very good buying inquiry noted in all areas. Hay prices steady. Very good interest noted from out-of-state hay buyers. Most hay production nearing completion with supplies becoming short in most areas.

Weekly Montana Hay Report (Week ending October 7, 2011)

Justin Lumpkin, Billings, MT

www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/bl_gr310.txt

Compared to last week: Hay prices mostly steady. Trade activity moderate to active. Demand good for all classes. Hay supplies throughout the state remain adequate on Good quality alfalfa and grass hay in large rounds, however Premium to Supreme quality alfalfa supplies in large bales are somewhat limited in availability.

Prices are for the week ending October 8, 2011

	Eastern Wyoming	Central & Western Wyoming	Western South Dakota	Montana
Alfalfa				
Supreme	\$190.00 - 240.00	\$250.00-	-	\$170.00 - 200.00-
Premium	\$165.00 - 190.00 \$140.00*	\$170.00 - 185.00 \$210.00*	\$100.00 - 150.00	\$145.00 - 165.00 \$125.00 - 150.00*
Good	-	\$130.00 - 200.00	\$80.00 - 105.00	\$85.00 - 110.00
Fair -Good	\$130.00 - 150.00	\$85.00 - 105.00 \$130.00*	\$70.00	\$75.00 - 90.00
Mixed Grass	-	-	\$65.00 - 70.00	
Grass	\$110.00	\$125.00	\$65.00	\$75.00 - 150.00 \$125.00 - 155.00*
Alfalfa/Grass	\$120.00	\$115.00 -175.00	\$60.00 - 125.00-	-
Timothy	-	-	-	\$150.00 - 180.00*-
Greenfeed	\$60.00	\$80.00 - 125.00	-	-
Straw	\$55.00 - 70.00	-	-	\$45.00 - 50.00-

All prices in U.S. dollars per ton FOB stack in medium to large square bales and rounds unless otherwise noted.

* small squares

Hay Quality Designations - Physical Descriptions:

Supreme: Very early maturity, pre bloom, soft fine stemmed, extra leafy - factors indicative of very high nutritive content. Hay is excellent colour and free of damage. Relative Feed Value (RFV): >185

Premium: Early maturity, i.e., pre-bloom in legumes and pre head in grass hays; extra leafy and fine stemmed - factors indicative of a high nutritive content. Hay is green and free of damage. RFV: 170-185

Good: Early to average maturity, i.e., early to mid-bloom in legumes and early head in grass hays; leafy, fine to medium stemmed, free of damage other than slight discoloration. RFV: 150-170

Fair: Late maturity, i.e., mid to late-bloom in legumes and headed in grass hays; moderate or below leaf content, and generally coarse stemmed. Hay may show light damage. RFV: 130-150

Utility: Hay in very late maturity, such as mature seed pods in legumes or mature head in grass hays, coarse stemmed. This category could include hay discounted due to excessive damage and heavy weed content or mould. RFV: <130

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