



Saskatchewan Hay & Pasture Report

The Hay & Pasture Report is now entering its 24th season! We hope you enjoy this first edition for the year 2023. We will bring you three more issues throughout the growing season to share forage production information, as well as forage pricing and growing condition updates for Saskatchewan and neighbouring jurisdictions.

For more forage resources, check out the SFC's Resources page or try the Forage U-Pick Tool on the website.

[Visit the SFC Website](#)

Saskatchewan Agriculture Crop Report

Excerpts from the Report for the period May 16-22, 2023

Producers across Saskatchewan continue to make tremendous progress with their seeding operations. Currently, 68 per cent of the 2023 crop is in the ground. This is still behind the five-year average of 76 per cent, but it is a very good sign that many producers in the western half of the province have wrapped up seeding or are only a few days away from finishing. Some producers would like to see some rain to ensure their crop has the moisture needed to emerge evenly and not be held back by dry conditions.

After another warm, windy week, topsoil moisture ratings have continued to drop in many regions. Province wide, crop land topsoil moisture is rated as 2 per cent surplus, 63 per cent adequate, 29 per cent short and 6 per cent very short. Hay and pasture land is rated as 59 per cent adequate, 31 per cent short and 10 per cent very short. The driest regions are the northwest, west-central and southwest, where some producers are worried their newly emerging crop will not have enough moisture to make it through the heat of July without a good soaking of rain.

Pasture conditions have improved this year from previous years due to some late spring storms bringing much needed moisture. Overall provincial pasture conditions are rated as 6 per cent excellent, 45 per cent good, 29 per cent fair, 14 per cent poor and 6 per cent very poor. Livestock producers are happy to see their pastures green up and improve after two challenging years in many parts of the province.

[Read the full Crop Report here](#)

2023 Saskatchewan Pasture Tour

Save the date! The Saskatchewan Pasture Tour will set out from Cochin in the north-west region on Wednesday, August 9th, 2023. Tour stops to include Hatherleigh Pasture and both bison and beef operations. Topics for discussion to include cover cropping, winter feeding strategies, watering systems, plant identification, forage seed production and more. Just \$85.00 for the full day, which includes transportation, lunch and supper.

Stay tuned for more details and an online registration link in June!



Reports on hay and pasture conditions from neighbouring provinces

Excerpt from Manitoba Crop Report, May 23, 2023

Forages

- There is carryover forage in pastures from last year, however new pasture growth has been slow due to cooler nights and minimal rainfall. Alfalfa hayfields that received fertilizer last fall are growing well but a lot of hayfields are slower growing due to cooler nights and minimal rainfall.
- Fertilization of hayfields, particularly those receiving hog manure has begun. Pastures are approximately one week away from supporting grazing livestock. Moisture conditions are adequate across the region, dugouts are full, and the grass/alfalfa is growing nicely.
- Hay and pasture is growing well where fertility is adequate, alfalfa and tame grasses are up to a foot tall.
- Wild hay and native pasture is growing well.

Livestock

- Some cattle are being turned out to pasture where there is carryover forage or turned out with supplemental feed. More cattle will go out over the next 7 to 10 days. Producers want to ensure forage growth is adequate, 5-6" tall, before grazing.
- Most animals on pasture are receiving supplemental feed to alleviate grazing pressure on grasses and to ensure their nutritional requirements are being met.
- Nearly all creeks, streams, dugouts, and sloughs have refilled to capacity.

[Read the full crop report here](#)

Excerpt from Alberta Crop Report Crop Conditions as of May 23, 2023

A provincial state of emergency was declared on May 6, 2023 due to the number of wildfires in the province. Albertans who require assistance can call 310-4455 for wildfire related information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Survey responses from the North West, North East and Peace regions indicated that wildfire activity is affecting some crop and pasture land. Evacuations, road closures and wildfire activity may impact seeding progress over the next week.

Significant seeding progression continued through much of last week, with minor disruptions reported near the survey date due to significant rains in areas of the province. Observers report provincial seeding progress as of May 23 at 85 per cent of all major crops seeded, ahead of the five-year average of 80 per cent and 10-year average of 82 per cent (Table 1). Across the province, seeding progress of major crops advanced 30 per cent, with expectations for seeding of major crops to be completed within the next two weeks in all regions. Seeding progress in the South and Central regions has caught up to historical averages, while the North East, North West and the Peace regions continue to report seeding progress ahead of historical averages.

Weekly good to excellent ratings for pasture and tame hay fields decreased in the South, Central, and North East regions, and improved in the North West and Peace regions. Provincially, pasture growth was rated at 51 per cent good to excellent (Table 3) and tame hay growth at 44 per cent rated good or excellent.

[Read the full report here](#)



Forage Rejuvenation: Fertilization and the Influence of Soil pH

Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC), May 9, 2023

The [Rejuvenation of Hay & Pasture page](#) on [Beefresearch.ca](#) has been “rejuvenated” to include more content relevant to Eastern Canadian producers. Updated information has also been added for the various methods of rejuvenating forages in regions across the country.

Rejuvenation of a forage stand, whether hay or pasture, involves using one or a combination of methods to increase productivity with a shift towards higher yielding forage species that provide improved nutritional value for livestock.

If an assessment of the current forage stand shows that there is not enough of a desired plant species, then fertilization can be an effective tool to reinvigorate and increase forage yields. Starting with a soil test, improving nutrient deficiencies can increase forage production.

Before making the investment in fertilizer, soil pH should be accounted for in conjunction with fertilizer plans—in the event of low soil pH, nutrients may be present in the soil but unavailable for uptake by plant species. When soils are very acidic (pH less than 5.8), soil bacteria and nitrogen-fixing bacteria in legume stands are negatively affected and soil biological activity is reduced. The opposite of this is also true, raising the pH too high can reduce the solubility of aluminum and manganese, which can be potentially toxic to plants at high levels.

[Read more](#)

Notice of Meeting

The Saskatchewan Forage Council Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 20th immediately following the LFCE Field Day.

It's a wall! It's a fence! No, wait, it's a conservation tool!

by: Krista Ellingson, a natural areas manager in the working landscapes program for the Nature Conservancy of Canada in Saskatchewan

There could be a joke that starts like this: a wildlife biologist and a rancher stand looking at a fence....

If you're familiar with all the ways biologists and ranchers push and pull over what types of infrastructure developments are supportive or detrimental for biodiversity conservation, you'll recognize that there's comedy gold somewhere in that scenario. As the manager of the Nature Conservancy of Canada's (NCC's) Working Landscapes program in Saskatchewan, I've spent many spring days looking at fences, thinking about fences, and scrambling through fences because I'm too lazy to open the gate.

A typical fence used for managing livestock isn't a wall. It's permeable for some animals — I can fit between the wires, a white-tailed deer can bounce over it, and a pronghorn antelope can duck under it, but it holds domestic livestock where we want them. You're probably wondering, “Why write an article about fences? What does this have to do with conservation?”



Image: Wildlife friendly fence. You can see where the fence bisected a cattle trail, and will change how cattle move across that piece of land. (Photo by NCC)

Grazing and grassland health

Grazing is an important ecosystem process and is part of what has kept grasslands healthy for millennia. Prairie plants and grazers have co-evolved. For as long as there have been people inhabiting grasslands, there has been an interaction between grazing animals, plants and human management that has helped maintain productive and diverse grasslands and has been central to human culture. The dominant species of grazing animals on North American grasslands have changed with time and the eventual introduction of domestic livestock, but the ecosystem services of grazing remains critical for maintaining healthy grasslands



Image: Cattle on native prairie grassland, SK (Photo by NCC)

Don't fence me in

When you imagine beef cattle out grazing on summer pasture, what infrastructure do you see in your mind's eye that makes it possible? Perhaps there is a dugout, or a water trough filled by a shallow buried water pipeline. There is likely a fence, and the most common type of fence would be a three- or four-strand barbed-wire fence with wooden posts. There is likely a series of fences, so that the cattle can graze in one area while the plants elsewhere recover and regrow from the previous grazing event.

Poorly placed, poorly designed infrastructure can increase predation, injure wildlife or create barriers to daily wildlife movement or seasonal migration. But a well-designed grazing plan using infrastructure designed to lessen any potential harms to wildlife can give ranchers the ability to control the timing, duration and intensity of grazing. This can have beneficial impacts on the structure and composition of the grassland plant community. An example of a common wildlife-friendly fence strategy is to install the bottom wire of the fence a bit higher (about 46 centimetres from the ground) and use a smooth wire to ensure that pronghorns can easily duck beneath the fence without being injured. This action reduces the most critical risks, while still resulting in a fence that will effectively hold cattle where intended.

Clever cattle

Cattle have a remarkable ability to sense direction and time of year, and often follow annual patterns of movement. For example, they can be aware that their usual wintering site is to the north, and they will spend more time in the north end of the field they are in, in anticipation of moving home soon, resulting in heavier grazing impact to the plants and soil. Cattle will also select different parts of a field based on the amount of available food, nutritional quality, and water availability.

Without tools to manage where cattle are grazing, their grazing behaviours often result in repeated concentration of grazing in the same areas, year after year, and the avoidance of other areas. This repeated grazing can contribute to shifts in plant community composition and decrease forage production over time.



Image: The ecosystem services of grazing remains critical for maintaining healthy grasslands. (Photo by

Working together for grassland health

By working together to support best management practices on grazing lands, we can help protect biodiversity while supporting a strong livestock industry. NCC is collaborating with numerous community pasture grazing groups across Saskatchewan, to encourage activities on the land that support and enhance biodiversity. These partnerships have also provided NCC with a unique opportunity to learn from the communities' nearly 100 years of grazing management knowledge. In addition to sharing information and learning from one another, NCC is helping to deliver a program that supports the good management of grasslands.

Investing in healthy stewardship

The **Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative's Stewardship Investment Program** awards grants for projects that result in mutually beneficial outcomes for ranching and biodiversity conservation. While the program can award grants for a wide variety of projects, most of the projects completed by grazing groups working with NCC have involved developing infrastructure to help manage grazing distribution or stock water availability while protecting native prairie and natural wetlands.

Electric fences are just one example of a common fencing project supported by the Stewardship Investment Program. Manufacturers are building all-in-one units that are relatively easy to set up, take down and move, and are highly visible to wildlife. Portable electric fences allow people to target grazing to a specific prescription and change that targeted area quickly and easily. Flexibility is needed to effectively apply adaptive management to a complex grassland resource, targeting grazing to specific areas where it can be used to achieve specific forage and wildlife habitat management goals.

In addition to portable and wildlife friendly permanent fence, The Weston Family Stewardship Initiative Program funds projects such as shallow buried water pipeline, dugouts to capture spring runoff, portable solar water pumps and troughs to prevent cattle from damaging sensitive wetlands or dugout banks, invasive plant control, prescribed fire, and more. For more information about the Stewardship Investment Program, visit prairiegrasslandsinitiative.ca. If you would like to know more about NCC's Working Landscapes program, I'd love to hear from you. Email me at saskatchewan@natureconservancy.ca.

3 seeding tips for perennial pastures

by: Heather Smith Thomas, Progressive Forage, April 7, 2023

A quality stand of perennial pasture can be a great long-term solution for your soil health and bottom dollar.

Traditional annuals and more exotic cocktail cover crop mixtures can make great forage for cattle on a temporary basis, but over the long haul a good stand of perennial pasture can be the best choice, according to Lorne Klein, a range management extension specialist, Ministry of Agriculture (Weyburn, Saskatchewan).

Select the right species and varieties for your situation and climate. Whether your basic grass is meadow brome, crested wheatgrass or something else will depend on your soils and climate.

Another thing to consider is whether there is any herbicide residue from the year before, if this was a field of annuals. Managing the residue from the previous crop is also important. "A massive amount of straw that was spread rather than chopped may interfere with seeding. Weed control is also crucial. You don't want weeds to fight forever in that new stand. Perennial weeds, whether quackgrass, Canada thistle or some other prolific plant can be hard to control – especially if you are planting a combination of legume and grass, which a good pasture should have," says Klein.

Species selection

Planning permanent pasture involves knowing your land. If it's good soil, you could probably use any option that will thrive in your climate.

"If you have temporary flooding on parts of the pasture, issues with salinity or gravelly, sandy areas, use a mix that includes something for all of these conditions/places, or you'll have to go back and double seed on problem areas, using a species that will work in those specific conditions. If there's a wetland or temporary flooding where your basic species won't thrive, plant something else there. If there's a salinity issue, you need species on those spots that can tolerate salty soils," says Klein.

[Read more](#)

Hay pricing information

Saskatchewan Hay Market Report

There is little forage on offer in Saskatchewan at this time. The Saskatchewan Forage Council monitors hay prices throughout the year as well as producing two Forage Market Reports annually.

In the period from January to April 2023, average hay asking prices were (source: Kijiji, Facebook, online classified ads and personal contacts):

Grass Hay: \$149/tonne

Alfalfa/Grass Hay: \$162/tonne
Alfalfa Hay: \$206/tonne
Greenfeed: \$154/tonne
Straw: \$82/tonne

[Read a two-page snapshot from our Winter Forage Market Report here](#)

USDA Market News Service Hay Report

May 18, 2023

Wyoming Hay Report: Compared to last report all reported forages sold steady. Limited supply of hay still available for sale. Most loads have been spoke for and just waiting for trucks to come and haul. Some rain showers in the eastern side of the state have dropped most of that area from severe conditions to abnormally dry to moderate drought. Most of Goshen County remains in a severe drought. Per NASS: Alfalfa condition is at 61% good compared to 51% last year. Corn planted is right on schedule with previous years at 35%. Barley is 62% emerged a little behind last years that was 83% for the same week. Week 23 of the snotel report has the state average at 107% with the basin high of 178% and the low at 59%. Last year the average was at 100% and at 79% in 2021.

South Dakota Hay Report: Little reported hay this week as many producers don't have much, if any hay left to sell. Warm and sunny conditions have the alfalfa looking good and ready to cut. Some producers seized the opportunity this week to make a first cutting as the humidity has been low and temps in the 80s. Cattle have been turned out to grass, rains came last week out west, with more chances this weekend. Corn planting finished up, beans quickly finishing as the weather held all week to allow much progress to be made. SE SD is the driest region of the state currently and could use another rain.

Montana Hay Report: Compared to last report(5/12/23): Hay sold generally fully steady. Local demand for hay was mostly light as many ranchers have turned out cows and yearlings for the season. However, demand for hay to ship south into drought stricken areas was moderate to good on light offerings. Most of the hay on this week's report is destined for the south central plains states. Producers continue to try to figure out where to price new crop hay and discussions have varied greatly. No offers have been set or accepted yet but plenty of discussion is occurring. Winter kill has been widely reported in western Montana and some producers lost a substantial number of acres. Many have seeded grass to help with the reduction in yield while others opted to rip fields out entirely and switch to spring wheat. Rains continue to fall in many locations as widespread afternoon showers have been seen this past week. First cutting is in great shape according to southern producers and many are looking at cutting first cutting in the next two weeks. Hay in central Montana remains behind due to a cooler wet spring and most producers are over 14 days out from starting first cutting. According to the drought monitor 29.09% of the is in Moderate drought or worse, down 4.70% from two weeks ago. 3.61% of the state is in an Severe drought or worse, down 0.30% from two weeks ago. 0% of the state is in Extreme or Exceptional drought or worse, unchanged from two weeks ago.

View the hay reports, hay prices and hay quality designations at:<https://www.ams.usda.gov/market-news/hay-reports>

[Click here to view the table of hay prices for May 18, 2023 for Wyoming, South Dakota and Montana.](#)

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The Saskatchewan Forage Council Gratefully Acknowledges funding for our 'Facilitating Forage Initiatives in Saskatchewan' project through the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association Industry Development Fund:



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