WINTER FORAGE MARKET PRICE DISCOVERY

January 2024

Saskatchewan Forage Council

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SASKATCHEWAN FORAGE COUNCIL

Production Season in Review

The January 2024 Saskatchewan Forage Market Price Discovery Report is a general industry overview of price and market trends through the compilation of data and information collected from a diverse group of forage industry stakeholders across Saskatchewan and in neighbouring jurisdictions.

As reported in September, conditions across much of the province were reported as generally favourable during the production season, with the exception of the south-west and west-central regions; once again devastated by drought, grasshoppers and gophers. Since the fall report, concern about moisture levels has escalated across most of the province, as much-anticipated and badly-needed fall rains failed to materialize, and there was no snow cover across most of the province into early January.

The outlook for grazing and water quantity and quality continues to be critical in many large areas, but the long, open fall with unseasonably warm temperatures has had a positive impact on feedstocks. Most producers reported adequate feed supplies to get them through this winter, thanks to the ability to stubble graze well into December, in many areas, that saved feed inventories. A lot of feed was purchased, in the south-west and into west-central.

Strong cattle prices drove slightly higher-than normal full and partial herd dispersal plans in 2023. Government crisis response at both Federal and Provincial levels provided options for producers, including livestock sales tax deferral, allowing some producers to make transition and exit decisions in response to drought concerns.

In compiling responses from every region of the province, the theme appears to be inconsistency. Within regions, the rainfall and subsequent productivity could vary greatly within just a few miles. Rain events, where they occurred, were not the general, soaking rainfall that was badly needed to address the serious moisture deficit. Vast areas across the south-west and west-central continued to experience devastating drought, and concerns about precipitation continue across the whole province, even in areas that had a relatively good year.

Table 1. 2023 Saskatchewan Dry Land Hay Yield Reported (tons/acre)

Region	Date	Estimated 2023 Dry Land Hay Yield (tons/acre)			
		Alfalfa	Alfalfa/Grass	Other Tame Hay	Greenfeed
Southeast	Oct 16	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.8
Southwest	Oct 16	0.6	0.6	0.6	1.0
East Central	Oct 16	1.4	1.4	1.1	1.9
West Central	Oct 16	0.7	0.7	0.7	1.1
Northeastern	Oct 16	1.9	1.9	1.7	2.0
Northwestern	Oct 16	1.7	1.4	1.2	2.5
Provincial AVERAGE	**Oct 16**	**1.2**	**1.2**	**1.0**	**1.7**

Data source: Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture Crop Report, October 16, 2023[1].

Regional reports have highlighted persistent drought across south-west and west-central regions for several years in a row; reflected in the yield reports. Slightly higher snow levels and a bit of early spring rain raised hopes that were dashed by another record-dry spring and summer. A general lack of fall precipitation and snow cover in those areas, and across the province, has increased concern for 2024. Provincial averages across four categories (alfalfa, alfalfa/brome, other tame hay and greenfeed) are just slightly below the 10-year average.

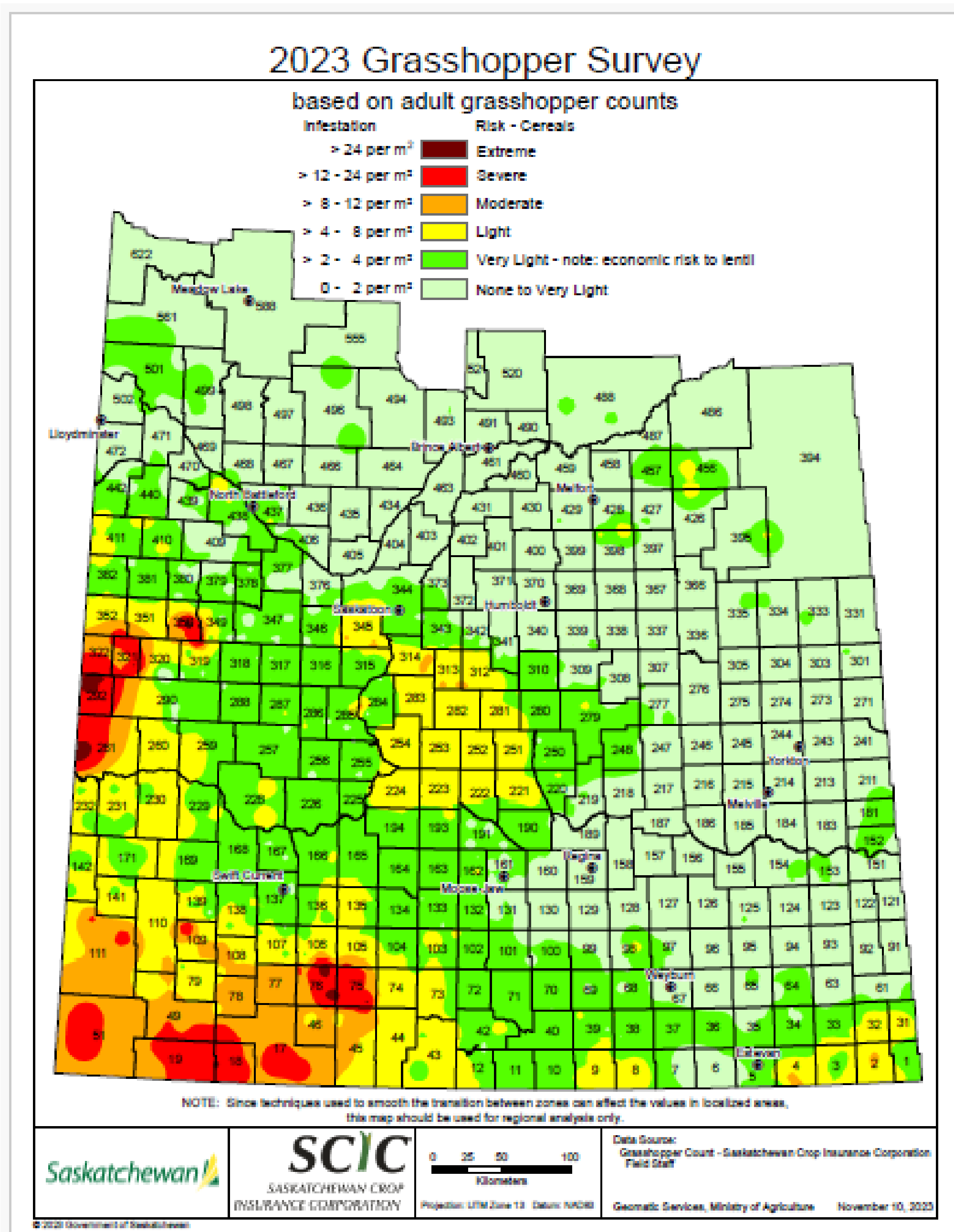
For comparison purposes, the 2022 yield report:

Region	Date	Estimated 2022 Dry Land Hay Yield (tons/acre)			
		Alfalfa	Alfalfa/Grass	Other Tame Hay	Greenfeed
Southeast	Oct 17	2.0	2.0	1.75	3.0
Southwest	Oct 17	0.7	0.6	0.7	1.3
East Central	Oct 17	1.5	1.7	1.3	2.1
West Central	Oct 17	0.8	0.9	0.7	1.3
Northeastern	Oct 17	2.0	1.8	1.5	3.5
Northwestern	Oct 17	1.4	1.5	1.0	2.0
Provincial AVERAGE	**Oct 17**	**1.4**	**1.4**	**1.1**	**2.0**

2. Field Pest Impact and Projections for 2024 Growing Season

Large areas of the south-west were once again devastated by grasshopper and gopher infestations, adding to the ongoing challenges of prolonged drought. Grasshoppers continued up through the west-central region, and both regions will be hoping for some relief from the pests in 2024.

Figure 1. 2024 Saskatchewan Grasshopper Forecast
(Source: Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, 2023[2])



The survey and forecast map are intended to provide general information on risk levels. The actual severity of grasshopper infestations may differ from the 2024 forecast map, depending on weather conditions in the spring. Hot and dry conditions favour growth and development of several grasshopper species.

3. Regional Forage Conditions in Saskatchewan

Regional Forage Conditions in Saskatchewan, *January 2024*

Northwest

- Feed quality good, some lower protein reported
- Feedstocks adequate
- Range of dry/worried to dry/adequate

Northeast

- Feed quality good, some protein concerns
- Feedstocks adequate due to carryover and availability of grains/pellets
- Range of dry/adequate

Trend

All regions report areas that have dry soil conditions. Spring moisture will be critical in 2024

West-Central

- Feed quality adequate, low protein & high nitrates reported
- Feedstocks should be adequate to short, helped by stubble grazing well into December
- Very Dry; need significant moisture for spring grazing

East-Central

- Feed quality generally good
- Feedstocks adequate to good
- Dry/patchy moisture availability

Trend

Higher than normal amounts of feed had to be purchased in the SW and WC areas

Southwest

- Feed quality good,
- some low protein concerns
- Feedstocks should be adequate to short, helped by stubble grazing well into December
- Very dry; will need significant moisture for spring grazing

Southeast

- Feed quality good; some low protein concerns
- Feedstocks adequate
- Some rainfall, still hoping for spring moisture

Note: "adequate feedstocks" indicates that feed supplies will likely be sufficient to last until spring grazing based on an average year. May be adequate due to production, purchased feed, supplement or extended grazing season

Source: Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture Crop Reports and Ministry of Agriculture Regional Specialists

4. Current Forage Freight Rates in Saskatchewan

Statistics on the tonnage and hauling distances for hay, greenfeed, straw and other baled forages being transported throughout Saskatchewan from year to year are not available, nor is there a record of where transported forages originate and where they're being transported to. The general sense from interviews with truckers, buyers and sellers is that a large portion of the feed being transported is being moved to south-west and west-central Saskatchewan from all other parts of the province. In addition, there have been sales within regions.

The most common method of packaging forages for transport is the 5x6 hard core round baler. Most hay bales are in the range of 1400-1700 pounds per bale. None of the truckers changed their rates based on bale weight, so obviously the cost per ton hauled is reduced with greater bale weights.

Short Haul: Local hauling (generally 25 miles or less) is often done with self-loading and unloading trucks. These are commonly trucks hauling 14 or 17 bales, and trucks with trailers hauling 28 bales. The range for loading is usually $4.50 - $5.00 per bale, and the cost for hauling averages 50 cents/bale/mile. These average rates are just slightly higher than in 2022.

Long Haul: the long haulers interviewed had a total of 13 trucks able to carry 34-38 round bales, and nine trucks had capacity to carry 40-48 round bales. Tandem trailers able to haul greater numbers are becoming more common. Most charge on a loaded mile basis. On trucks hauling 34-38 bale loads, rates varied from $7.25 to $12.00 per loaded mile. Trucks hauling 40-48 bales ranged in price per loaded mile from $10.00 to $13.00.

When hauling distances were less than 50 miles, some transporters had a flat rate per load and others charged on an hourly basis. Of the truckers interviewed, rates were in the range of $160.00 – $200.00 per hour, up from 2022 surveys.

Based on cost per bale per mile, the price range was relatively wide, at 21 to 43 cents. Twenty per cent of the truckers surveyed charged under 25 cents per mile and sixty per cent were in the 25 to 35 cent range. Twenty per cent were charging more than 35 cents per bale per mile. Higher costs were on those jobs where trucks were hauling shorter distances and charging by the hour, due to time spent loading and unloading.

On January 13, 2024, Natural Resources Canada reported average diesel retail pricing to be $1.58/litre in Regina and $1.63/litre in Saskatoon (down from $1.80/litre in Regina and $1.91/litre in Saskatoon in early January 2023).

5. Current & Projected Saskatchewan Forage Prices for 2023/2024

Forage prices were obtained throughout the fall of 2023; up to and including January 11th, 2024. Prices were assembled from listings, personal phone calls to producers, livestock nutritionists, feedlots, hay growers, and transporters.

Table 2a. Average Current Forage Asking Prices in Saskatchewan as at January 11, 2024

Forage Type	Simple Average Price ($/Tonne)	Weighted Average Price ($/Tonne)	High ($/Tonne)	Low ($/Tonne)	# of Trades Simple/ Weighted	Weighted Average Price January 2023	Weighted Average Price January 2022
Grass Hay	$169.07	$144.15	$264.55	$117.58	16/12	$159.40	$196.83
First Cut Alfalfa	$224.62	$266.50	$330.69	$137.79	7/5	$187.81	$252.54
Second Cut Alfalfa	$262.17	$316.89	$363.76	$205.76	9/6	n/a	$323.14
Alfalfa/ Grass Mix	$186.40	$200.89	$330.69	$101.04	48/36	$162.94	$257.76
Greenfeed	$187.33	$196.11	$253.53	$88.18	15/9	$142.67	$306.35
Clover	$169.59	n/a	$169.59	$169.59	1/0	$119.93	n/a
Cereal Straw	$99.11	$110.03	$133.04	$66.14	17/12	$59.43	$98.53
Pulse Straw	$115.74	n/a	$77.16	$154.32	2/0	n/a	$92.76

Figure 2. December-January Forage Price Three-Year Comparison (*weighted averages, $/tonne*)

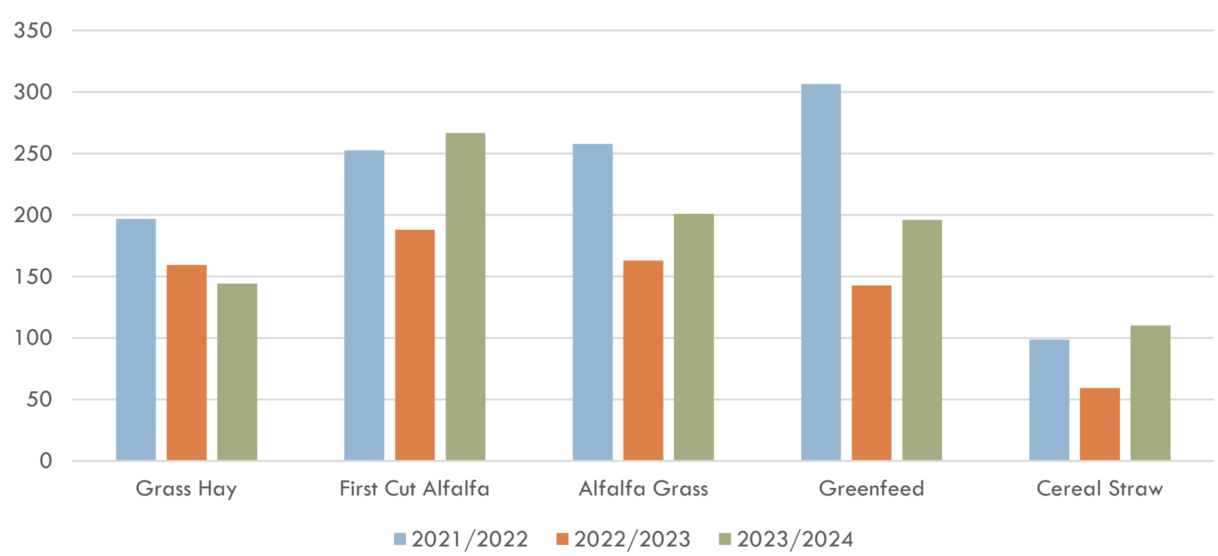


Table 2b. Average Fall Long (Aug-Jan) Forage Asking Prices in Saskatchewan at January 11, 2024

Forage Type	Simple Average Price ($/Tonne)	Weighted Average Price ($/Tonne)
Grass Hay	$179.53	$172.91
First Cut Alfalfa	$219.70	$225.57
Second Cut Alfalfa	$257.29	$283.71
Alfalfa/Grass Mix	$187.04	$187.18
Greenfeed	$181.15	$179.04
Clover	$154.30	$106.49
Cereal Straw	$102.86	$110.16
Pulse Straw	$118.50	n/a
Organic Hay	$124.92	n/a

Baled Perennial Forage Prices: *verified (settled) sales* Winter 2023-2024

The most common forage traded is round baled perennial hay, and the majority is a combination of alfalfa and grass. For most of the verified sales, producers were asked to estimate percentage of alfalfa or grass. Most sellers estimated 30 per cent alfalfa and 70 per cent grass, but these were estimates only. The prices in this narrative were obtained from personal interviews with more than 30 individuals either buying or selling by private treaty, as well as from seven private auctions (six in south-west Saskatchewan and one in south-east Saskatchewan) and is intended as a supplement to the table above. A record of bale numbers traded was not tracked for all verified sales. From the auctions and sales where bale numbers were recorded, this survey included pricing for at least 25,000-30,000 bales.

As in 2022-2023, there is strong correlation between baled perennial forage prices and location within the province. Much of the hay is being sold to buyers in south-west Saskatchewan; most of that hay is being trucked in from other regions of the province. For different regions of the province, hay bales were trading in the following ranges, based on survey of settled prices:

South-west: 10 to 15 cents per pound
South-central: 7 to 11 cents per pound
South-east: 6.5 to 10 cents per pound
North-west: 6.5 to 11 cents per pound
West-central: 11 to 12 cents per pound

Eight sales were found for standing alfalfa/grass hay. The price range was surprisingly wide, from 1.0 to 10 cents per pound. The single price of 10 cents per pound was in the south-west. Five of the sales were in the range of 2.0 to 5.75 cents per pound. Lower prices were from fields or areas of fields that tended to be small, fragmented and low-yielding.

Small Square Bales

Saskatchewan asking prices and number of listings for small square bales were very similar this winter as compared to last winter. Grass bales had a slightly higher price in January 2024 but had fewer listings. Prices for small squares in Alberta are higher than those in Saskatchewan for all classes of hay, and prices in Manitoba are lower for all classes of hay. This is consistent with pricing for larger bale sizes and with price discovery in previous years.

For those listings that included bale weights, the average small square bale on offer was 50-60 pounds (approximately 23-27 kg). Based on average bale weight, the asking price for alfalfa/grass small square bales is about $308/metric tonne. This is over $120/metric tonne more than the simple average asking price for large alfalfa/grass bales, but small square bales come with the convenience of not requiring equipment to move or feed and can often be stored indoors. Other ways of appealing to acreage owners or horse owners without feeding equipment are ads for small round bales that can be moved by hand and offers to deliver feed for a charge.

Table 3. Square Bale Asking Prices: Saskatchewan and Neighbouring Provinces December 1, 2023 through January 11, 2024

Forage Type	Saskatchewan Average Price ($/bale)	Range ($/bale)	Alberta Average Price ($/bale)	Manitoba Average Price ($/bale)
Alfalfa	$10.50 (4 listings)	$10.00-12.00	$13.33 (3 listings)	$6.00 (1 listing)
Alfalfa/Grass	$7.68 (11 listings)	$4.00-12.00	$11.06 (16 listings)	$6.71 (7 listings)
Grass	$8.50 (4 listings)	$6.00-10.00	$12.65 (6 listings)	$7.67 (7 listings)
Greenfeed	(0 listings)	n/a	n/a	$8.00 (1 listing)
Straw	$4.73 (11 listings)	$2.00-6.00	$4.61 (14 listings)	$3.71 (3 listings)

Dehydrated Alfalfa

Overseas markets for alfalfa remain strong, as reported in previous surveys, so there is very little product traded in this country. With most reports indicating alfalfa acres continue to decline globally, world prices are likely to remain strong.

Table 4. Average Saskatchewan Processed Alfalfa Product Prices for 2023/2024

Product Type	Price ($/Tonne)
Dehydrated Alfalfa Pellet (avg 17% Crude Protein)	$420 - 440
Sun cured Alfalfa Pellets (avg 15% Crude Protein)	$400 avg

Silage

Eleven feedlots were contacted for silage yield, silage price in the pit, silage harvest costs (cut, chop, haul, pack), hay costs and straw costs.

Wet silage yield varied widely, from 1.8 tonnes/acre in a drought area to 11 tonnes/acres in a high rainfall area.

Corn silage is less common than barley silage in Saskatchewan feedlots. Those with corn silage valued it at $90/tonne in the pit. All the feedlots surveyed had barley silage with values assigned in the range of $60-108/tonne in the pit. The higher values in the pit were from feedlots in areas with low crop yields due to drought.

The assigned cost of silage harvest (cut, chop, haul, pack) varied widely across the feedlots from $10/tonne to $24/tonne. The feedlots with the lower costs tended to silage the crop themselves and had higher yields. The feedlots with the higher costs tended to hire the silage operation and/or had low crop yields due to drought.

Custom silage operators base their rates on chopper horsepower, corn processor option, crop type, fuel supplier (feedlot vs chopper), hauling distance, number of trucks required and packing responsibility (feedlot vs chopper). Common rates for choppers are $1.00-1.20/hp/hour with the customer supplying fuel. For a 650 hp machine, approximate chopping rates (tonnes/hr) are significantly different: corn – 170, barley – 120, wheat/triticale – 100, alfalfa – 80. Trucks hauling 14 tonnes/load are charged at $130-135/hour. The number of trucks needed depends on hauling distance and number of corners. Packing requires a four-wheel drive tractor at a cost around $225/hour.

For the feedlots purchasing hay, prices were in the range of 6 -12.5 cents/pound. Prices were highest in the southwest region and trended lower in the north and east regions (see Hay Prices section in this report).

Feedlots that purchased straw in the swath reported pricing of $6/bale (0.6 cents/pound) in higher rainfall areas and $20/bale (2.0 cents/pound) in a lower rainfall area. Costs for baling and hauling were additional. Other operations reported purchasing baled straw for 5.0 and 6.5 cents/pound delivered to the feedlot.

6. Additional 2024 Provincial Forage Market Considerations

Strong fall prices encouraged some beef producers to significantly reduce herd numbers, or exit completely, particularly in those areas struggling to manage drought conditions and feed shortages. These dispersal numbers are still being analyzed, but it would appear that a slightly higher number went to slaughter, rather than to other herds. Although feed supplies are reported as adequate in most regions, many producers do not have the feed or pasture to take on additional livestock, particularly with the strong cattle prices and lack of certainty about spring moisture conditions.

It cannot be determined to what degree the population reductions are occurring in each region of the province. Neither can it be determined the main reasons for the reduction, including drought, herd reductions, herd liquidations, age of producers, profitability, conversion of land from perennials to annuals cash crops and/or various other reasons.

CanFax 2023 Update: Saskatchewan

Canada's cattle herd declined 1.5% to 12.16 million head as of July 1st 2023 (Table 32-10-0130-01 Statistics Canada, 2023). The Saskatchewan herd declined a slight 1% to 2.495 million head, to be the smallest since 1993. The beef cow inventory declined 2.6% to 1.02 million head. This is down 27,600 head from July 1st, 2022. Total heifer inventories increased 1.3% or 3,800 head to 286,000 head. Heifers on beef operations increased 4,200 head but heifers for beef replacement fell by 5,500 head. Beef heifers for slaughter increased 10% or 9,800 head. Note, historical data from Statistics Canada was revised in July 2023.

Saskatchewan 550 lb steers averaged $353/cwt in 2023, 43% higher than 2022 and 56% higher than the five-year average. In the first half of 2023, Saskatchewan 550 lb steers averaged $327/cwt, 41% higher than the first half of 2022 and 44% higher than the five-year average for the first half. The second half saw significant price increases; with 550 lb steers averaging $384/cwt, 45% higher than the second half of 2022 and a substantial 71% higher than the five-year average for the second half.

A historically strong calf market pushed estimated cow-calf returns to record highs in 2023. The beef cow culling rate is estimated to be 13.4%, steady with last year and up from the 10-year average of 12.6%. Cow marketings in 2023 are projected to be up 7% from 2022. Western Canadian cow marketings from January to November 2023 were steady with last year and were 5% higher than the five-year average."

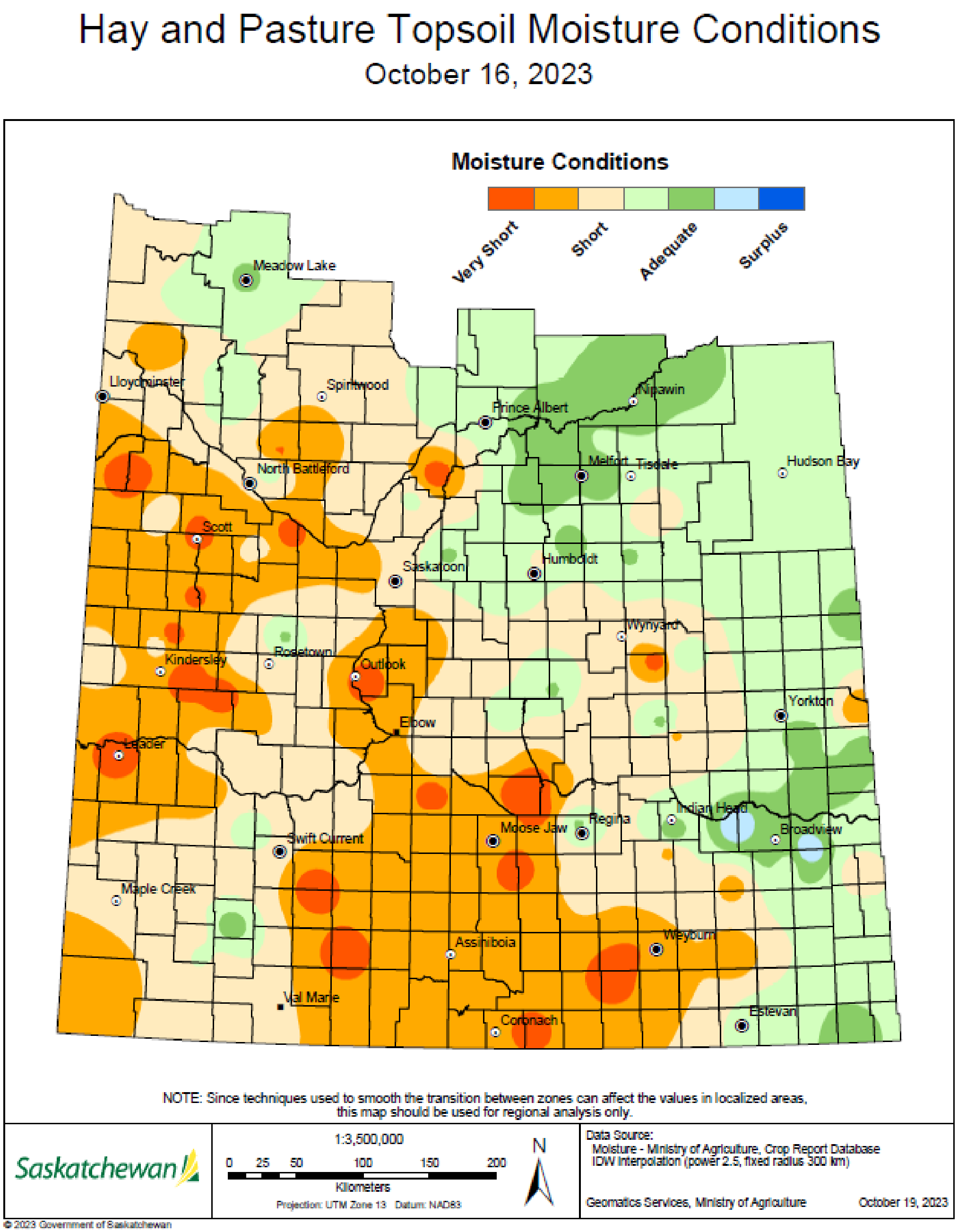
Interest in seeding new forage stands remains low, as producers wait to see what spring precipitation will be like. Marginal annual cropland seeded to greenfeed continues to fill the perennial forage gap, instead of being seeded to new perennial stands. Slightly lower grain prices (down from 2023) could see fewer marginal annual croplands seeded to higher-value grain crops, creating some opportunity for forages. In 2023, some better-quality perennial forage stands were terminated in order to seed higher-priced field crops, but decisions around those acres may be affected by softer grain prices in 2024.

Pastures in many areas are still in poor to very poor condition due to widespread drought. The hoped-for fall rains did not come, and there was no snow cover across much of the province until early January. To date, that snow cover is still very light in most areas. Concern about spring run-off is escalating, and spring rainfall will need to be significant to have an impact on the moisture deficit across much of the province.

The 2023 Canada-Saskatchewan Feed Program announced in October 2023 covers up to 70 percent of "extraordinary feed costs" due to drought conditions for the period May 1, 2023 to March 1, 2024. Purchasing feed, grazing land rental and transport costs are all eligible for producers in designated drought areas. How much uptake this program has had and whether it has impacted forage or freight prices is currently unknown.

Figure 4 illustrates the cause for concern in general hay and pasture topsoil conditions; very similar to last year's report.

Figure 3. Hay and Pasture Topsoil Moisture Conditions Final 2023 Crop Report October 16, 2023
(Source: Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, 2023[3])



7. Current Alternative Feedstuff Prices

Alternative feedstuffs include:

- pellets made partially from screenings of cereal and pulse crops
- pellets made partially from lower grade cereal and pulse crops
- oat hulls
- canola meal
- dried distiller's grains (DDGs)
- alfalfa pellets
- feed grains

Table 6a lists average prices for a variety of alternative feed sources in Saskatchewan, with percent crude protein (CP%) basis dry matter, total digestible nutrients (TDN%) basis dry matter indicated where available, on dollars per tonne basis FOB the plant where they were produced, or in bushels, as indicated.

Resourceful producers will consider several factors when sourcing alternative feeds:

- cost of feed
- cost of transportation
- moisture content of the feed
- storage of feed including special bins, silos, or conditions to reduce spoilage
- nutritional value of feed including any deficiencies, nutrient interaction with other dietary components, or toxicities that must be corrected

The use of silage, straw and planned and unplanned (salvage) greenfeed continues to be well-utilized across this province, as reported in previous years. These feedstuffs are often paired with feed grain or alternatives to balance livestock rations, and to stretch feed sources through the winter.

Quality of forages was considered good in many areas of the province this year. Livestock producers have reported adequate supplies of hay, straw, and greenfeed, in most areas, again, with the exception of south-west and west-central, where drought, grasshoppers and gophers severely impacted production. The long, warm fall has alleviated some concern about adequate feedstocks in many areas.

Crop yields on feed grains and barley used in producing many alternatives were closer to provincial long-term average again this year, making them reasonably accessible and a bit more affordable than last year.

Very few companies interviewed offer a trucking delivery option for their products. Prices can range broadly, based mainly on distance hauled and size of load, potential for backhaul and whether the trailer has an unload auger. Logically, the longer hauls and heavier loads tend to have the lower costs per tonne per mile hauled. Prices range widely from 14 to 39 cents per tonne per mile.

Table 5. Alternative Feedstuff Prices as at January 12, 2024

Commodity	Winter 2024 Price	Details
Pellets (grain/grain screening)	$352/tonne (average)	CP% 13 – 15 TDN% 61- 80
Pellets (grain/grain screening)	$415/tonne (average)	Low fibre CP%14
Pellets (alfalfa)	$400/tonne	Suncure
Pellets (alfalfa)	$430/tonne	Dehy
Dried Distillers Grain	$365-431/tonne	Crude protein 28-32% TDN 78%
Corn	$7.11 – 7.50/bushel	
Rolled corn	$331/tonne (avg)	
Feed wheat	$6.94/bushel	
Oats	$4.60 – 5.15/bushel	
Barley	$5.00 – 6.42/bushel	
Rolled barley	$308/tonne (avg)	

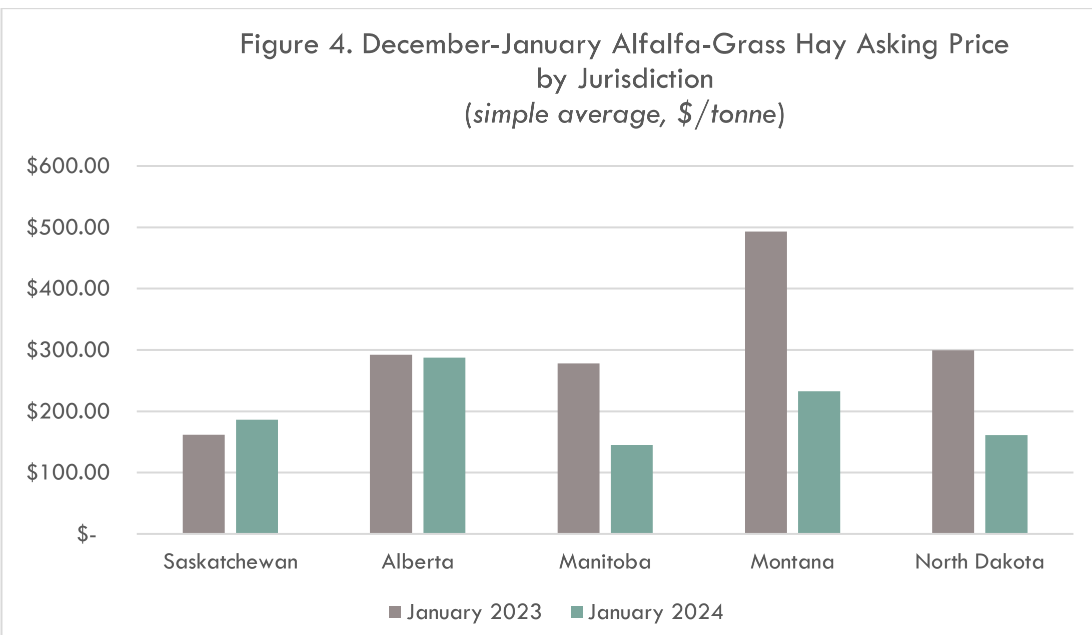
Grain and grain screening pellets are available to producers from numerous retailers across Saskatchewan. Pellets may be used in feedlot, backgrounding, cow-calf, range or finishing operations. Pellets can be quite variable in feed value, dependent on the supplies of grain and grain screenings available to the manufacturer on any given day. Currently, processors are reporting good availability. The use of pellets in rations has become so common that to many, it would no longer be considered an alternative feed source.

8. Forage Price Trends in Neighbouring Jurisdictions

Table 6. Forage (Asking) Prices in Adjacent Provinces and States (Winter)

	Alberta		Manitoba		Montana*		North Dakota*	
Forage Type	Price Range ($)	Avg Price** ($/Tonne)	Price Range ($)	Avg Price** ($/Tonne)	Price Range ($)	Avg Price** ($/Tonne)	Price Range ($)	Avg Price** ($/Tonne)
Alfalfa – 1st Cut	254-303	275.55 (5)	120-267	191.22 (6)	192-295	248.63 (7)	99-220	185.79 (8)
Alfalfa – 2nd Cut	220-382	327.51 (10)	331-344	337.58 (2)	258-368	313.51 (5)	143-209	237.54 (4)
Alfalfa/Grass	173-529	287.31 (26)	55-276	144.97 (21)	147-471	232.48 (26)	58-209	160.96 (17)
Grass	147-374	253.18 (12)	65-220	115.93 (9)	103-383	242.26 (19)	95-250	140.94 (26)
Straw	44-143	84.16 (29)	44-99	76.28 (10)	82-133	101.46 (8)	49-99	100.40 (19)
Greenfeed	136-309	222.73 (19)	125-147	138.68 (4)	110-283	175.30 (8)	61-151	157.49 (15)
Pulse Straw	121	121.25 (1)	n/a	n/a	133	132.58 (1)	98-157	127.67 (2)

**American prices have been converted to CDN currency values average from January 5- 9, 2024 Bank of Canada conversion rate ($1USD = $1.3364 CDN)*
***Average Price listed in $/Tonne and number of offers listed in brackets*



North Dakota

The North Dakota Crop Progress and Conditions Report for January 2, 2024 indicates that for the week ending December 31, 2023, topsoil moisture supplies were rated 6% very short, 21% short, 71% adequate, and 2% surplus. Subsoil moisture supplies rated 11% very short, 27% short, 61% adequate, and 1% surplus. A large portion of southeast North Dakota received between 2-4" of rain in the week prior to December 29, 2023 and this has helped move soil moisture conditions in a positive direction.

The majority of cattle and sheep are reported to be in good condition as of January, as mild winter conditions were favourable for livestock in early winter.

Hay and roughage supplies rated 2% very short, 18% short, 75% adequate, and 5% surplus. Stock water supplies rated 2% very short, 14% short, 83% adequate, and 1% surplus.

Forage prices discovered in 2024 were lower than the 2023 prices for North Dakota in this Report. Asking price for mixed alfalfa/grass hay was $36/tonne lower on average in 2024 than in 2023. Only greenfeed had a similar asking price through both years.

Montana (reference: January 5, 2024 USDA Hay Report
https://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/ams_2769.pdf)

The USDA reports that large hay producers continue to sit on large inventories as limited movement has been seen since late summer. Demand for straw is light, but there are single loads of straw moving at a steady price. All prices remain similar to those reported by the USDA for December 2023. Producers have been able to extend the grazing season due to warmer than expected weather, and this will help to extend hay supplies across the state. It appears that although hay supplies exist, there is not a lot of hay moving as producers fear drought conditions may continue in 2024 and are therefore keeping excess hay in reserve rather than selling.

According to the drought monitor 21.3% of the state is in Moderate drought or worse, up 18.20% from last report. 2.68% of the state is in a severe drought or worse, down 1.74% from last report.

Asking prices discovered for this Report were significantly lower in 2024 than in 2023, for all classes of forages. In many cases the difference was over $100/tonne. The change in value of the Canadian to US dollar only accounts for 0.02 percent of this difference.

Alberta

Like Saskatchewan, Alberta enjoyed unseasonably warm conditions in December 2023, helping bolster feed supplies and allowing producers to graze longer. Hay and straw prices remain strong in Alberta as concerns remain about possible continuing drought conditions in many areas. Alberta Farm Express (Catherine Brown, January 2, 2024) reports that although Canada experienced record forage exports in 2022, availability of exports was down in 2023. Export hay prices also declined and this impacts timothy and alfalfa hay export markets for Alberta.

Compared to last year's Report, asking prices discovered in the winter of 2023-2024 were lower on average, based on a similar number of listings. Alfalfa/grass hay did not see much change in price, with a decrease of only $5/tonne asking price from the previous year.

Manitoba

Parts of Manitoba have experienced lower-than-average snowfall to date this winter and have enjoyed mild conditions. As in other jurisdictions, producers look for more snowfall in the new year to bring spring moisture and improved growing conditions. Going into winter in Manitoba, feed supplies were considered adequate on average. 40% of producers have some surplus hay production. 50% considered their hay supply adequate for the winter while 10% are short hay supply. Levels of straw, greenfeed and feed grain supplies are seen as adequate. Producers who are short on inventory due to the highly variable moisture conditions experienced throughout the growing season, should have no problem sourcing feed to purchase (Manitoba Agriculture Seasonal Summary Report, 2023). Straw supplies are also believed to be adequate with few producers needing to purchase straw.

Compared to last year, most forage asking prices discovered for the Report were higher, with the exception of first-cut alfalfa. The amount of hay on offer in Manitoba is low compared to other jurisdictions and not a lot of forage appears to be moving during December 2023 to January 2024.

9. Forage Seed Prices

The average retail price of commonly purchased and seeded forage species in Saskatchewan is presented in Table 8. This information reflects general forage seed prices at the current time. Prices represent Certified #1 seed, unless otherwise specified.

Table 7. Forage Seed Prices in Saskatchewan as at January 12, 2024

Class	Species	2023 Average Price $/lb	2024 High ($/lb)	2024 Low ($/lb)	2024 Average Price $/lb
Grasses	Certified Smooth Brome	$6.25	$6.90	$6.25	**$6.48**
	Smooth Brome (Common)	$6.15	$6.15	$4.79	**$5.47**
	Certified Meadow Brome	$6.57	$6.99	$4.95	**$6.25**
	Meadow Brome (Common)	$6.04	$6.15	$4.70	**$5.43**
	Hybrid Brome	$6.26	$7.25	$5.50	**$6.44**
	Russian Wildrye*	$9.75	$	$	**$**
	Tall Fescue	$4.2	$5.25	$4.10	**$4.78**
	Fairway Crested Wheatgrass	$7.23	$9.99	$6.40	**$8.20**
	Kirk Crested Wheatgrass	$6.56	$6.85	$6.10	**$6.35**
	Crested Wheatgrass (Common)	$5.04	$6.85	$4.70	**$5.93**
	Intermediate Wheatgrass	$6.03	$6.50	$4.25	**$5.83**
	Pubescent Wheatgrass	$8.62	$8.75	$6.50	**$7.92**
Legumes	Alfalfa - hay variety	$5.82	$6.10	$4.85	**$5.61**
	Alfalfa - creeping root	$5.45	$5.85	$5.45	**$5.78**
	Alfalfa (Common)	$5.48	$5.60	$4.85	**$5.35**
	Cicer Milk Vetch	$6.70	$7.99	$6.50	**$7.05**
	Sainfoin	$4.04	$6.50	$4.95	**$5.48**
	Alsike Clover	$4.46	$5.45	$4.69	**$4.98**
	Certified Sweet Clover	$5.75	$6.25	$5.75	**$5.95**
	Common Sweet Clover	$4.63	$5.85	$5.70	**$5.78**
	Hairy Vetch	$4.05	$4.75	$3.85	**$4.28**

* indicates no pricing reported

Native forage seed availability across most species continues to be scarce, with the exception of a few grasses.

There are more programs supporting producers in seeding land back to native forages; more likely to see uptake and drive markets for native forage seed in years of less drought pressure. A listing of native seed producers may be found through the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan at *https://www.npss.sk.ca*.

Producers should contact seed companies or distributors for specific information related to product attributes and availability as well as any guarantees of quality, certification or other parameters that are specific to that company, species or variety.

Interest in mixes of annual/biennials continues to build, as more producers seed cover crops for soil improvement and livestock feed on cropland. Cover crops are plants sown to provide cover rather than just for harvest purposes. Depending on an individual producer's goals, they may be grown for achieving soil health goals (biodiversity, extending the season, improving ground cover, etc.), to decrease the need for inputs, and/or to provide feed for livestock. Cover crops for forage may be swathed, grazed standing or baled. Some baled cover crop forage has been discovered for sale in Saskatchewan and neighbouring jurisdictions in recent years. Testing for nutritional quality, including sulphates and nitrates is important before feeding to livestock.

Cover crop seed may be purchased as individual seed types or in a blend that targets a specific purpose such as grazing or seeding after a cash crop is harvested. Cover crop seed cost in Saskatchewan ranges from as low as $10 per acre to a high of $90 per acre depending on the complexity of the mix, types of crops selected and seeding rate. Blends may or may not contain commonly available crops like annual cereals and forage peas, and this will also influence pricing. In general, more complex blends with higher growth potential tend to be favoured in areas with higher rainfall, while drier areas may be seeing more success with simpler mixes and lower-cost crops that are likely to establish even with lower rainfall.

Tame forage seed prices have remained fairly consistent over the over the past few years, although some species saw an increase due to production challenges resulting in reduced quality and yield. Feedback from forage seed companies indicated that supply of the major varieties is fairly good.

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