

# Hay Report

13 February 2026

DELIVERING  
*for* DAIRY



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# Summary

## Driving Prices Up

- Dry conditions and early feed gaps are lifting hay enquiry sooner than usual, particularly in areas with critical soil moisture and limited grazing value from standing feed.
- High water prices (\$400+/ML) are reducing irrigated lucerne production, with many growers choosing not to extend cutting into autumn.
- Graziers may buy ahead of the peak feed gap to secure supply before possible price lifts, focusing on fibre sources to maintain stock.
- Tight on-farm cash flow and grain being held back may reduce planting options and prompt more conservative feed-buying decisions before autumn.

## Driving Prices Down

- Market sentiment across southern hay-producing regions remains flat, as growers await stronger buying signals while quality and timing issues limit confidence.
- Rain-affected cereal hay may become a lower-cost option for buyers this autumn.
- Incoming rain across NSW and QLD may slightly ease short-term concerns about irrigated winter crop establishment and delay hay purchases in the north.

## National weather summary and outlook

- March to May is likely to be drier than average across most of southern and western Australia, with a 60–80% chance of below-average rainfall.
- Severe rainfall deficits continue across key farming regions, including most of Victoria, southern New South Wales, South Australia, and parts of southern WA and Tasmania.
- Soil moisture is critically low in many areas, with conditions worsening through January in southern and inland regions.
- Evaporative stress has intensified across large inland areas and coastal regions of the south, further pressuring dryland farming.
- Northern Queensland and the Top End are the only regions expected to receive above-average rainfall through the March to May period.
- Extreme weather conditions, particularly in heat-affected areas, increase the risk of haystack fires due to spontaneous combustion. Regular checks and careful storage are recommended.

*Download The BOM's [Weekly Agriculture, Climate and Water Update](#) for more information.*

- Buyers are encouraged to feed test and view fodder before purchase to ensure feed quality.

# Regional commentary

## Atherton Tablelands

- Rainfall across the Tablelands from December to January was mostly above average, with some flooding in the north. This has led to good soil moisture and strong pasture growth, which may soften short-term demand for hay, particularly among graziers.
- Daily rain is ongoing, especially in Mareeba and Ravenshoe, creating wet conditions that limit fieldwork, including hay production and planting.
- Although growers are reporting better dry windows between rainfall events, at least five consecutive dry days are still needed to undertake hay-making, limiting activity and slowing supply readiness.
- Some hay is being used locally for weaning, but movement is expected to lift next week as cattle sales resume in Mareeba following rain delays. These sales are likely to support increased demand and could push local hay prices higher.
- No clear rainfall trend is forecast for March to May. With high soil moisture and good pasture conditions likely to extend, overall regional hay demand may remain patchy and dependent on market activity such as livestock sales and cropping schedules.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Pasture (Rhodes Grass) hay: +/-0 (\$220 to \$360/t). Prices remain steady this week.

Please note: Hay in the Atherton Tablelands is traditionally priced at \$/bale, so checking bale weights for conversion is important. The price range indicated is for feeds of varying quality. We recommend testing and viewing the feed before purchase to ensure its quality.

## Darling Downs

- From December to January, rainfall across southwest Queensland was below average, trending closer to average near the coast. Soil moisture levels are average to below average, and while temperatures have eased from recent extremes, conditions remain dry overall.
- The climate outlook for February to April shows only a slight chance of seeing above-average rainfall, with low confidence in the forecast.
- The region would benefit from more consistent rain to reduce irrigation pressure and replenish on-farm water storage ahead of autumn decisions. However, straw production has increased due to these favourable conditions, while protein-rich hay has suffered. There appears to be a large amount of stored straw in the region.
- A broad trough is forecast to move across southern and central Queensland from Thursday, bringing a risk of minor flooding and more isolated moderate flooding. Heavy showers and storms are expected, with areas like Oakey forecast to receive up to 100mm of rain on Friday and 60mm over the weekend. These rains may ease current soil moisture stress and support short-term recovery for summer croppers and hay producers.
- Following minor price corrections last week for pasture hay and lucerne, prices have now stabilised across the region. Many growers, like those elsewhere in southern Australia, are waiting to see whether increased rainfall boosts pasture growth and buying activity.

- High water demand is still limiting irrigated lucerne production. Many growers have chosen not to water for another cut. Unless there is meaningful rain through autumn, lucerne availability is expected to remain tight.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$300 to \$400/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$500 to \$600/t). Prices remain steady this week.:
- Straw: +/-0 (\$150 to \$200/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$200 to \$300/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## North Coast NSW

- Dairy farmers along the mid-north coast have welcomed recent rainfall, which is helping kick-start pasture recovery after extended dry periods and heavy reliance on hand-feeding.
- While the broader season has been dry, soil moisture remains well below average across northern coastal areas.
- Lismore is forecast to receive significant rainfall across the weekend. These falls will help rebuild soil moisture and provide critical support for pasture heading into the winter season.
- Further inland, in Inverell, rainfall will be lighter but still significant, with up to 30mm expected over the weekend. For growers there, the rain is welcome but adds pressure to already-narrow dry windows for fieldwork.
- Despite this reprieve, the broader March to May climate outlook remains dry, with a low chance of receiving above-average rainfall. This forecast, combined with low current soil moisture, continues to suggest challenges for sowing, germination and pasture development unless follow-up rains occur.
- Last week, concerns were raised about increased irrigation demand for crop establishment, potentially constraining water access for fodder production. The current rain may help ease this risk in the short term, but longer-term water limitations remain an issue for many.
- Hay price movement across the region is steady. With soil moisture still below average for most coastal areas, and more farmers looking to support winter growth, any meaningful improvement in hay supply is likely to hinge on continued rainfall throughout March.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$300 to \$350/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$400 to \$500/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$120 to \$160/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$250 to \$300/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## Central West NSW

- Hot, dry weather across the region is reducing pasture quality and increasing pressure on graziers to source hay for supplementary feeding.
- Standing feed is dry and low in nutritional value, which is lifting interest in available hay as livestock conditions become harder to maintain.
- Stock water availability is declining, with regional storages at 51 per cent, well below last year's levels. This poses longer-term challenges for both grazing and irrigated fodder production.
- Dry weather has provided good conditions for straw cutting and baling, resulting in solid supply volumes in some areas.
- No significant rainfall is forecast for the region in the coming week, and temperatures are expected to climb. This will likely drive further demand for hay if conditions continue to deteriorate.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +5 (\$280 to \$380/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$415 to \$545/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$110 to \$175/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$180 to \$280/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## Bega Valley

- Rainfall from November to January was average to below average across the South Coast of New South Wales. Soil moisture remains generally average, but the outlook to May shows a low chance of above-average rain, which may limit pasture growth and stretch stored fodder further.
- This week, inland areas such as Cooma and Bombala are seeing a shift to warmer, drier conditions. After light, patchy showers mid-week, both locations will climb towards 28°C by Tuesday, with clear skies and no significant rainfall forecast. These drier days will give growers a chance to carry out fieldwork and reassess soil conditions.
- With limited rain and rising temperatures, feed use is likely to remain elevated across much of the region.
- Bega continues to report the highest hay prices nationally, making it challenging for buyers outside the region to source from there. For local buyers, however, demand remains steady, particularly among dairy producers who are looking to stretch their homegrown feed. Most are turning to pasture or cereal hay for short-term relief.
- Trade remains low in volume and highly regional. Freight costs, ration planning, and existing supplier relationships are keeping most hay movement local and consistent.
- Some change to pricing this week.

- Cereal hay: +5 (\$345 to \$465/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$490 to \$630/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$225 to \$275/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$285 to \$415/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## **Goulburn/Murray Valley**

- Below-average rainfall from November to January, combined with record-breaking heat events, has left soil moisture across the region severely depleted. This creates poor conditions for pasture growth and early sowing.
- After six weeks of virtually no rainfall, small amounts in the past 10 days have offered some reprieve, with Swan Hill receiving 5.6mm, Kerang, 3.6mm, and Indigo, 2mm of rain.
- The forecast for March to May remains dry, with a low chance of exceeding average rainfall. Without rainfall in the coming weeks, hay demand is likely to rise as livestock producers enter autumn with limited feed on hand.
- High water prices at \$430 per megalitre are forcing irrigators to reduce corn planting and may limit further lucerne or protein hay production as growers near their final cuts.
- Lucerne growers who have been irrigating since spring are moving toward their last cut. With curing conditions expected to decline beyond March, production will likely taper off.
- Hay used for chaffing has moved at \$500 to \$550 a tonne ex farm in the Murray and Goulburn Valley. Protein hay, including lucerne and vetch, remains in steady demand, with recent bids over \$400 a tonne ex farm.
- Some dairy and beef farmers in northern districts are buying hay early to avoid further price increases or supply issues ahead of the autumn feed gap.
- Despite these pressures, hay prices remain firm but flat across most categories for the second reporting week in a row, suggesting the market is in a holding pattern while buyers assess autumn outlooks.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$245 to \$365/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$390 to \$550/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$90 to \$110/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$190 to \$350/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## Gippsland

- Gippsland recorded average rainfall from November to January, and most coastal areas still hold average soil moisture. However, without a solid rainfall event since November, paddocks, particularly in southern and northern areas, are starting to dry out noticeably.
- The three-month outlook to May indicates a low chance of above-average rainfall, which could tighten conditions further and lead to higher on-farm feed use.
- An Extreme Fire Danger warning remains current for West and South Gippsland but is expected to ease as the weather cools. A light shower may reach Yarram on Tuesday, offering a short-lived refresh. In Neerim South, temperatures are set to rise from 17°C on Friday to the low 30s by Tuesday, with a slight chance of up to 5mm of rain. Orbost in the east is warming to 32°C by Tuesday, with no rain forecast.
- A Yarram-based hay and silage producer reports that the local market remains fairly static, with only small volumes of silage moving. He notes the region, particularly around Yarram, has not received meaningful rain since November. While demand is currently steady, he expects it will lift as farms run through stored fodder more quickly due to the ongoing dry.
- Late-season hay and silage from Leongatha is slowly entering the market. The quality is yet to be confirmed, though early signs suggest it will be reasonable.
- Prices remain stable this week, in line with other parts of southern Australia. Growers are watching enquiry levels closely, expecting that once the dry conditions continue, buying activity will lift.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$275 to \$425). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$470 to \$580/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$115 to \$175/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$180 to \$350/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## Southwest Victoria

- Grain harvest is now complete across northern parts of the region, but low soil moisture and a poor rainfall outlook for March to May are causing concerns for pasture regrowth and autumn crop sowing.
- Coastal areas received average rainfall from November to January and currently hold average soil moisture; however, inland areas remain dry, with limited subsoil moisture reserves.
- Much of southwest Victoria is sitting between 20 and 50mm of root-zone soil moisture, highlighting depleted conditions that are already putting pressure on both pasture and feed planning.
- Standing stubble and dry feed are still available in paddocks, offering a brief reprieve, but the main concern among producers is falling stock water availability. Reports suggest the region has already been destocked by 30 to 35 per cent, which may lead to increased cropping activity in the months ahead to shore up feed supply.



- Input costs have risen sharply, with urea at \$820 per tonne and MAP at \$520. This is making many growers cautious as they weigh up the risk of further dry conditions.
- Dairy producers in the Otways are facing additional pressure, with some moving stock due to fires, smoke haze, and extreme heat. This has reduced milk production and could increase short-term hay and silage needs in fire-affected areas. Some producers are concerned that valuable silage reserves from a strong season may now be compromised or lost.
- Cereal hay affected by rainfall in the northwest of the region may become a more attractive roughage option heading into autumn, as other feed sources tighten.
- Despite growing pressure on feed reserves, hay prices across categories remain firm and flat for the second consecutive reporting week, suggesting a market holding steady as both buyers and sellers watch for autumn rainfall signals.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$265 to \$405/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$400 to \$560). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$100 to \$150/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$190 to \$310/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## **Southeast South Australia**

- Recent rainfall brought a short-lived break from the dry, hot conditions, with graziers reporting some benefit to livestock. However, soil moisture remains mostly below average following January's record heatwaves.
- Southern districts received some rain midweek, but a return to dry weather is now underway. Temperatures are forecast to rise again, with Tintinara reaching 38°C by Monday. Mt Gambier is expected to follow a similar pattern. These conditions are likely to limit pasture recovery and reduce opportunities for fieldwork.
- Low root-zone moisture, together with a poor rainfall outlook for March to May, continues to challenge both pasture growth and autumn crop sowing planning.
- According to one Central SA hay grower, hay quality across much of South Australia is poor this season due to dry conditions and mistimed spring rainfall. Buyers should not expect prime-quality hay. The only high-quality hay reported came from the Yorke Peninsula, where it was baled early in October.
- After some price adjustments last week, hay prices have remained steady across all types. This flat trend reflects moderate demand as buyers weigh up feed quality against current conditions and plan ahead for potential shortages.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$260 to \$340/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$430 to \$570/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$130 to \$180/t). Prices remain steady this week.

- Pasture hay: -5 (\$255 to \$335/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## Central South Australia

- Rainfall in recent days brought a brief reprieve to parts of South Australia after extended dry and hot conditions. Graziers report the rain will help livestock in the short term, though broader improvement to pasture remains limited.
- Soil moisture across the region remains mostly below average after January's record heatwaves. This is restricting regrowth and making sowing and grazing decisions more difficult.
- Some southern parts received rainfall midweek, but dry weather has returned. Temperatures are expected to climb again, with Jamestown forecast to reach the mid-30s by Sunday. This will likely evaporate surface moisture quickly and limit pasture benefit from recent rain.
- The region continues to face a low chance of exceeding average rainfall from March to May, heightening concerns heading into autumn for both crop sowing and feed supply.
- Hay quality across much of the region is poor following dry conditions and mistimed spring rain. Reports from local growers indicate hay quality is generally poor across the region due to persistent dryness and spring rainfall that arrived too late. Only hay baled early in October on the Yorke Peninsula is considered to be of higher quality.
- Some hay from the Mid North that was rain-affected may become a more affordable roughage option this autumn, particularly with growing interest in alternative feed sources.
- One Minalton-based grower notes they have seen no rainfall since November, but being dryland, they are content with current conditions. Though soil moisture is low, they report strong straw yields similar to those in Central West NSW. They are currently busy baling straw and still have chaff dumps to process.
- These factors suggest that while hay availability may continue, feed quality and moisture conditions will heavily influence purchasing decisions leading into autumn.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$250 to \$310/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$400 to \$520/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$110 to \$190/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## Southwest Western Australia

- From November to January, rainfall across much of South West Western Australia was average. However, the far south and south-eastern coastal areas recorded rainfall well below average, according to the Bureau of Meteorology. Parts of the southwest and central west received above-average rainfall, providing some variation in conditions across the region.

- Despite pockets of good rain, soil moisture remains below average in many areas. The cropping country is currently fallow, and producers are focused on moisture-conservation strategies ahead of autumn sowing.
- Most of the wheatbelt faces a rainfall outlook indicating an increased chance of below-average rainfall from March to May, raising concerns for growers planning early crop establishment.
- A rainband linked to ex-Tropical Cyclone Mitchell is forecast to bring up to 50mm of rain across large parts of the wheatbelt this week, with minimal falls expected further south. While this will help in some areas, it will be patchy and not enough to shift the broader outlook.
- The region has come off the back of an excellent grain season and strong hay production, with most export hay now moved offshore. Local exporters are now looking ahead to quality and safety concerns in future crops, particularly managing annual ryegrass toxicity (ARGT). With twist fungus no longer commercially available, there is renewed focus on identifying alternative management options.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$185 to \$325/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$590 to \$790/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$110 to \$170/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$220 to \$270/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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## Northwest Tasmania

- Rainfall from November to January was average to below average across most of northern Tasmania. Soil moisture remains reasonable across coastal zones, but western and inland areas are drier.
- The rainfall outlook for March to May indicates a low chance of exceeding average rain, which may place added pressure on irrigation scheduling and pasture management as conditions stay cooler and drier.
- This week is bringing cool, cloudy, and windy conditions. Overnight temperatures have dropped to 8°C in places like Waratah, with snow reported on nearby mountains. Showers will increase again from Friday and early next week, which may temporarily ease surface dryness.
- On the coast, similar weather is playing out, with slightly milder overnight temperatures. However, strong winds continue, and a marine wind warning is current for the region. This may limit some field activity, particularly for those cutting or moving hay.
- Local hay contractors report patchy rainfall, with some rural pockets receiving helpful falls while nearby farms miss out entirely. Conditions are continuing to dry, and while any rainfall helps, the patchy nature of recent falls makes it hard for growers to plan based on local weather.
- Demand remains steady, and growers are fielding an increasing number of enquiries from buyers looking to secure feed. However, this interest has yet to convert into increased sales. Pricing remains stable across most categories.
- Some local sellers are sourcing hay from beyond their immediate area to meet buyer needs, but have not been satisfied with the quality overall.



- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$200 to \$260/t) Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$220 to \$300/t) Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$130 to \$190/t) Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$240 to \$300/t) Prices remain steady this week.

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**Dairy Australia Limited** ABN 60 105 227 987  
Level 3, HWT Tower  
40 City Road, Southbank Vic 3006 Australia  
T +61 3 9694 3777 F +61 3 9694 3701  
E [enquiries@dairyaustralia.com.au](mailto:enquiries@dairyaustralia.com.au)  
[dairyaustralia.com.au](http://dairyaustralia.com.au)



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