

Hay Report

15 May 2026

DELIVERING
for DAIRY



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Summary

Driving Prices Up

- Dry conditions in central and northern NSW and southern QLD are keeping hay moving in from Victoria and the Riverina, alongside continued destocking and limited local supply.
- North Coast NSW pasture hay is fluctuating (up this week, down last week) due to mixed conditions, grass type, quality, and demand.

Driving Prices Down

- Australian farms are now at peak fuel and fertiliser use amid the winter sowing window, but grower sentiment has eased for the first time in weeks as supplies have been assured.
- The Victorian hay market is flat, with plentiful winter fodder supply in many areas.
- Forecast rainfall across southern and eastern regions, plus favourable sowing conditions in Central SA, SE SA, and SW WA, is lifting optimism for pasture and winter crop establishment and can reduce near-term buying urgency.
- Increased silage production and enquiry (Atherton Tablelands, wetter North Coast NSW areas including Lismore, and NW Tasmania) is easing immediate hay demand, with Atherton Rhodes grass adjusting ahead of water-affected new season bales.

National Weather Summary and Outlook

- April rainfall was below average for all states and territories except the Northern Territory, with New South Wales recording its second-driest April on record. Rainfall deficiencies across north-eastern New South Wales and southern Queensland are limiting autumn growth and keeping soil moisture under pressure.
- A first northwest cloudband for 2026 is forecast to develop this weekend, bringing a broad rain band from the tropics southwards. Falls are expected to be uneven, with higher falls expected through some inland areas.
- From June to August, below-average rainfall is likely for central and southern Queensland, inland New South Wales, most of Victoria, southern South Australia, eastern Tasmania, and the West Australian wheatbelt. There is a risk of a drier winter pattern in these areas.
- Maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be above average from June to August. Warmer conditions can increase moisture loss in already dry soils, and frost remains a concern.
- Water storage in eastern and southern states has reduced capacity by up to 50% in some catchments.

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

- Dry weather expected from Monday should provide a short access window for paddocks, supporting cutting activity and progress on sowing plans.
- Wet conditions have kept growers from getting another cut, so the first hay off is likely to be rain-affected and sit in the mid- to lower-quality range, with some lines only suitable for mulch.
- Local reports indicate a shortage of mechanics and high demand for repairs, which is delaying machine servicing and holding back haymaking while the dry window is available.
- Enquiries are growing for weaning fodder, but strong green cover is reducing urgency to buy, keeping demand steady rather than rushed.
- Expected Rhodes grass pricing sits between \$200 and \$240 per tonne once baled and stored, depending on how well crops dry before cutting.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Pasture (Rhodes Grass) hay: -40 (\$200 to \$300/t). Prices decrease 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

- Dry conditions are still limiting pasture growth as soil temperatures decline. Recent rainfall in the past two months has not been enough to change feed conditions.
- Year-to-date rainfall has been very low in the New England region between Tenterfield and Armidale. This is increasing buying interest from areas adjacent to the Downs and supporting steady hay movement into southern Queensland.
- Stocking rates are reducing in the driest areas from Coomera to Dalby and Texas.
- Winter feeding decisions are now set for many producers. This is keeping cereal hay demand steady across a range of qualities.
- Hay deliveries from Victoria and the Riverina are continuing. Most of this additional demand is coming from graziers and smaller containment feeding systems.
- Irrigated growers are preparing to plant oats and barley. However, soil moisture remains below average across the Darling Downs and Granite Belt. This is constraining winter cropping decisions and may reduce locally produced fodder later in winter.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/- (\$330 to \$430/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$600 to \$700/t). Prices remain steady this week.:
- Straw: +/-0 (\$150 to \$200/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$220 to \$270/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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North Coast NSW

- Soil temperatures are declining and rainfall in the past two months has been insufficient in the drier districts. Below-average soil moisture is limiting pasture growth and influencing winter cropping decisions. The June to August outlook has no clear rainfall signal.
- Producers are reducing stocking rates to protect carrying capacity. Hay and straw are moving in from Victoria and the Riverina, with most new buyers linked to smaller containment feeding systems rather than large feedlots.
- Conditions remain mixed. Lismore has had prolonged rainfall, and planting has been delayed by a lack of consecutive dry days. Grafton, Tenterfield and Glen Innes have had limited meaningful rainfall, and growth risk remains high.
- Pricing is highly location-dependent, with tropical grass round bales reported at \$100 to \$150 locally, and soybean silage reported at \$150 to \$200 per round bale in wetter zones where silage yields have been strong.
- Some 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: -80 (\$230 to \$310/t). Prices decrease this week.

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Central West NSW

- Rainfall over the past two months has been insufficient to boost pasture growth. Below-average soil moisture persists, including pockets on the north-east margins in the lowest 1 per cent, which is making winter cropping decisions challenging.
- Cattle producers remain cautious on carrying capacity and are destocking, while more feeder-type cattle are being sold as weaners.
- Hay continues to move in from Victoria and the Riverina, and cereal hay of all qualities remains in demand.
- The June to August outlook is leaning towards below-average rainfall. There is a chance the first northwest cloud band of 2026 will pass over this weekend, but it remains uncertain how much rain will reach drought-affected parts of central NSW.
- Reported cereal hay prices up to \$600/t are linked to higher quality hay brought in from further afield, typically Victoria, with freight included. Local hay pricing in the region is quoted ex-farm; quality can vary, and availability cannot be guaranteed.
- Some change to pricing this week.

- Cereal hay: -5 (\$330 to \$420/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +10 (\$460 to \$590/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +5 (\$145 to \$205/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$235 to \$335/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Bega Valley

- The first northwest cloud band of 2026 is developing over Australia and is set to deliver daily showers across the region into next week. This rainfall will help support winter crop growth and livestock feed conditions.
- Overnight temperatures under 5°C are now typical. Pasture growth is slowing, with supplementary feeding expected to continue through winter.
- Demand for hay is slow, with plenty of stored fodder still available. Some hay is moving north to drier regions.
- Pasture hay prices have remained flat since early February. Hay from the Bega Valley remains the highest priced of all reported hay-growing regions.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$380 to \$500/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +10 (\$535 to \$675/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +5 (\$240 to \$290/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$285 to \$415/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Goulburn/Murray Valley

- The northwest cloud band moving across southern and eastern Australia this weekend is set to bring follow-up May rainfall to the region, supporting early-sown crop growth and livestock feed conditions.
- From June to August, rainfall is likely to be below average. This keeps attention on stored soil moisture and the need for follow-up rainfall through winter.
- Hay demand remains slow across Victoria, with enough stored fodder in sheds for winter. Hay continues to move into drier regions of NSW from the northernmost parts of the Murray Valley.
- Local growers reported a cold, windy change late last week, with further rainfall expected Sunday and Monday. There is a focus on topping up moisture to support canola that has already emerged.
- After sowing into dry topsoil through April, some growers received significant rain last weekend, helping keep sowing programs moving. Earlier rainfall through February and early March left

The hay report is produced for Dairy Australia by the Australian Fodder Industry Association (AFIA) – the national independent voice for the Australian fodder industry which connects the entire supply chain from seed to feed. For further information: www.afia.org.au

moisture deeper in the soil profile, but the top five centimetres had remained very dry through April. Colder conditions have slowed crop growth, so the forecast rains will be welcomed.

- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$255 to \$375/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +5 (\$440 to \$600/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$110 to \$130/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$175 to \$335/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Gippsland

- With impressive rainfall across the Latrobe Valley in May, totals are likely to be below average for Gippsland from June to August. This keeps pressure on winter feed budgets and makes stored fodder an important back-up.
- The first northwest cloud band of 2026 will deliver rainfall across the weekend. Western areas are set to do better, while East Gippsland is expected to see lighter daily showers. This rainfall supports pasture and crop growth where temperatures allow, taking urgency out of hay buying.
- Hay demand across Victoria is slow, with plenty of stored fodder in sheds heading into winter.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$285 to \$435). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +5 (\$520 to \$630/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$130 to \$190/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$160 to \$330/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Southwest Victoria

- For June to August, there is no clear rainfall signal, suggesting roughly equal chances of above- or below-average rainfall.
- Despite that outlook, the first northwest cloud band of 2026 is developing over Australia and is expected to deliver a broad band of rainfall to the region. This rainfall will follow a good start for May, which has already boosted cropping conditions and livestock feed availability.
- Further rainfall is still needed in some areas to fill dams for dryland operations, supporting winter crop prospects and livestock water security.
- Hay demand remains slow, with plenty of stored fodder in sheds heading into winter. This continues to limit urgency in buying.
- Some change to pricing this week.

- Cereal hay: -10 (\$245 to \$385/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$445 to \$605). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$115 to \$165/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$185 to \$265/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Southeast South Australia

- Rainfall was well above average from February to April. May rainfall has been solid so far, lifting soil moisture and pasture cover, which is keeping confidence steady.
- From June to August, rainfall is likely to be below average. This may increase reliance on stored feed later in winter if follow-up rainfall does not arrive.
- A northwest cloud band is expected to bring rainfall to the region this weekend. Around 20 mm of rain is forecast for Naracoorte on Saturday, then easing to lighter daily showers next week. This will support ground cover and keep any hay buying pressure on hold.
- Hay demand remains slow, with plenty of stored fodder in sheds for winter. Prices in the region have remained steady for the fourth consecutive week, reflecting the favourable conditions.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$230 to \$310/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$400 to \$540/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$125 to \$175/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$205 to \$275/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Central South Australia

- Above-average rainfall from February to April, plus steady May rainfall, has boosted pasture growth and winter crop prospects, keeping near-term hay demand subdued.
- After drought conditions at this time last year, the run of May rainfall is boosting soil profiles and giving winter-sown crops a far better chance of success, which supports on-farm feed supply and helps hold hay demand.
- The northwest cloud band is forecast to bring further rainfall, with Jamestown expecting 9 mm on Friday and 15 mm on Saturday, supporting short-term pasture and crop growth and easing immediate buying pressure.
- Hay demand remains slow, with plenty of stored fodder in sheds for winter.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$250 to \$310/t). Prices remain steady this week.

- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$430 to \$550/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$110 to \$190/t). Prices remain steady this week

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Southwest Western Australia

- Warm conditions and existing soil moisture are supporting early winter crop emergence. Root-zone soil moisture is at average to above-average levels, which reduces short-term pressure on hay demand.
- Parts of the Gascoyne and Pilbara are still in a prolonged rainfall deficit. This will limit pasture growth going into the dry season and may lift demand for imported fodder, including hay freighted from the south.
- Rainfall from June to August is likely to be below average, particularly across the wheatbelt. If rainfall does not follow through, supplementary feeding may start earlier and tighten southwest hay availability later in winter.
- Growers are planting a record 2.28 million hectares of canola. With more area locked into grain crops, there is less flexibility for cereal paddocks to be cut for hay unless seasonal conditions force a change.
- Wheat area is down on last season, while barley area is higher. This shift can reduce the pool of traditional cereal hay if fewer wheat paddocks are available to cut, and it can change the type of fodder being offered later in the season.
- Growers report mixed soil conditions across areas. Most canola and lucerne has been planted, with wheat and barley sowing in progress. Dams are dry, but planting is tracking well where moisture has held.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$195 to \$295/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 February to April was well below average across western Tasmania. Soil moisture remains below average across much of Tasmania. Parts of the northwest are closer to average.
- June to August rainfall is likely to be below average across Tasmania, increasing the chance of earlier feeding and firmer hay demand through winter.

- The first northwest cloud band of 2026 is forecast to deliver rainfall this weekend and throughout the week. Up to 20 mm of rain is expected in Smithton on Sunday, with daily showers forecast, leaving producers hopeful of replenishing soil moisture lost during frequent cold and windy conditions.
- Spraying has been further delayed by wet weather, which may push crop timing back if rain continues.
- Enquiries are steady, but buyers remain cautious due to freight and fuel costs. Some are choosing lower-quality local fodder to reduce transport costs, which may affect livestock performance, particularly in dairy herds.
- Silage continues to move, while hay demand is slower.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$200 to \$260/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$360 to \$440/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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