Dairy Australia

Hay Report

17 July 2026

DELIVERING for DAIRY

Contents

AFIA
Australian Fodder Industry Association

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

Summary

Driving Prices Up

- Challenging seasonal conditions in northern regions are reducing hay area and lowering expected quality, with ongoing wet weather likely to affect curing.
- Ongoing dry conditions across inland southern QLD and parts of WA are reducing yield potential and limiting planted area.
- Continued reliance on irrigation in key growing regions is increasing production risk and constraining output where water availability is uncertain.
- A shift toward grain, canola and other cash crops is reducing the area that will be cut for hay, particularly in SA and WA.
- Many producers are retaining hay to rebuild on-farm reserves after recent dry years, reducing availability to the market.

Driving Prices Down

- Strong pasture growth across Vic, SA and Tas is improving on-farm feed availability, reducing immediate buying demand.
- Buyer activity remains subdued across most regions, with livestock producers leaning on available pasture instead of purchasing hay.
- Contractor-held hay and existing stock in market channels are taking longer to clear, contributing to weaker pricing sentiment.
- The use of alternative forage crops and silage is reducing reliance on hay in some regions, easing demand pressure.

National Weather Summary and Outlook

- July to August root zone soil moisture will fall below average across eastern, southern and western Australia, including much of eastern and northern QLD, parts of Vic and SW WA.
- For August to October, rainfall is likely to be below average across southwest WA, most of southeast Australia, parts of eastern Australia, and parts of eastern and southern QLD.
- There is an increased chance of unusually low rainfall for parts of southeast and southwest mainland Australia.
- Both daytime and overnight temperatures are likely to be above average south of the tropics.
- The El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is now in El Niño phase. However, this is only one of several factors influencing Australia's climate.

  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.

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Regional commentary

Atherton Tablelands

- Recent dry, sunny conditions and strong winds are allowing consistent hay cutting and drying for the first time this season, giving growers a clear but short window to make progress.
- Hay production is well behind schedule across the region, with most growers only now getting into paddocks and many crops already past optimal cutting, reducing quality to stock feed or mulch.
- Supply is only just starting to move, with earlier rainfall and waterlogging delaying access to paddocks and pushing back harvest timing across the district.
- Many growers are choosing to cut forage for silage instead of hay to secure income, reflecting that conditions have not allowed reliable hay production.
- Demand remains active at a local level, particularly from hobby farms and smaller operators, but limited volumes and mixed quality are restricting broader market supply.
- Most growers report they are only covering costs this season, with delayed production, lower quality outcomes, and reduced bale volumes impacting returns.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Pasture (Rhodes Grass) hay: +/-0 ($200 to $300/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

- Below-average rainfall since April has left soil moisture low across the region, delaying the season start and holding back winter crop growth, which is expected to reduce hay yields.
- Many growers have had little to no rainfall this year, with some tracking around 250mm below normal, and are now relying on irrigation to carry crops through to harvest.
- Conditions vary sharply across the region. Inland areas such as Inverell, Tenterfield and Manilla have missed most of the rainfall and remain extremely dry, while more northern areas have received strong growth, highlighting a clear split in production potential.
- Planting area is down in these inland zones, as dryland growers are only sowing what they can support, which will limit total hay production from these areas.
- Current mild, clear weather is supporting crop growth and fieldwork, but without follow-up rainfall, production risk remains high, and hay supply is likely to stay tight into spring.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($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

- Rainfall since late May has helped ease earlier soil moisture deficits, supporting crop establishment and early growth. Warm conditions are driving progress, although crops are still behind due to the late break.
- Field access remains a challenge. Intermittent dry windows have allowed some progress, but conditions are tightening again. Forecast rainfall of around 30mm per day in areas such as Lismore into next week is expected to leave paddocks waterlogged and work at a standstill.
- These wet conditions are limiting any haymaking opportunity in the short term, increasing the risk of quality issues and further tightening local supply.
- Strong demand continues from northern New South Wales and southern Queensland, with the North Coast region relying on brought-in hay as local availability is limited.
- A forecast for below-average rainfall from August to October across southern and eastern Australia may shift conditions longer term, but in the immediate window, excess rainfall is the key factor impacting hay production currently.
- 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 ($230 to $310/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Central West NSW

- Early July has brought more frequent frosts across the region, following a milder June that supported strong crop and pasture growth. Recent cold overnight temperatures around Condobolin are increasing the risk of crop damage at a key growth stage.
- Clear, sunny days are supporting crop growth and allowing fieldwork to continue. There has been a visible lift in pasture and ground cover after earlier dry conditions. However, follow-up rainfall is needed to maintain soil moisture and protect yield and hay quality later in the season.
- Irrigated production remains under pressure, with declining water storages affecting planting confidence and limiting potential hay output.
- A forecast for below-average rainfall from August to October across southern and eastern Australia adds further risk to production if conditions remain dry.
- Some change to pricing this week.

- Cereal hay: -5 ($315 to $405/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($450 to $580/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 ($140 to $200/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($230 to $330/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Bega Valley

- Early July has brought more frequent morning frosts across the region, following a milder June. These colder mornings are starting to put pressure on crops and pastures.
- Recent rainfall across southeast Australia has supported soil moisture and helped maintain growth, with sunny and mild days allowing fieldwork to continue.
- However, a run of dry weather ahead, combined with a forecast for below-average rainfall from August to October, is starting to raise concerns around maintaining soil moisture and protecting hay yield and quality later in the season.
- Strong coastal winds are also posing a risk to crops, with potential to impact standing fodder and reduce quality if conditions persist.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -5 ($365 to $485/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($525 to $665/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 ($240 to $290/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($280 to $410/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Goulburn/Murray Valley

- Soil moisture remains above average across much of central and western Victoria after recent rain. Crops and pastures are growing well, although minor flooding in northern areas may delay fieldwork in the short term.
- Frosts have arrived, particularly around Kyabram. With crops running ahead of schedule, this increases the risk to yield and hay quality if conditions turn colder.
- Dry conditions ahead, combined with a below-average rainfall outlook from August to October, are raising concern about keeping enough moisture in the soil through spring.
- Pastures are performing strongly, with high-protein ryegrass meeting livestock needs. Dryland lucerne has also grown well, adding to fodder availability.
- Hay prices are easing as buyer interest slows. Vetch hay remains difficult to move, and with more supply coming and sheds filling up, some growers are adjusting prices to clear stock.

- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -5 ($240 to $360/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($430 to $590/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 ($115 to $135/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($170 to $330/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Gippsland

- Rainfall from April to June was below average across parts of Gippsland, although most paddocks received some rain last weekend. Soil moisture remains mixed across the region.
- A below-average rainfall outlook from August to October is raising concern about maintaining moisture through spring, particularly in lighter country.
- Dry, sunny conditions across the whole of Gippsland are allowing good access for fieldwork, but the lack of follow-up rainfall may limit further growth if it continues.
- Strong winds along the East Gippsland coast are posing a risk to standing fodder, which may affect hay quality if conditions persist.
- Some producers are actively managing winter feed gaps by growing forage crops such as kale. Strong yields are improving grazing options and reducing reliance on purchased feed, which may ease local hay demand where these crops are in place.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -5 ($270 to $420). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($510 to $620/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 ($135 to $195/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($155 to $325/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Southwest Victoria

- Above-average rainfall from April to June, particularly towards the Wimmera, has helped turn around conditions in areas that were previously very dry. Soil moisture remains high across much of central and western Victoria, although some northern regions are dealing with minor flooding that may delay fieldwork.
- Crops and pastures are growing strongly, with many crops in the Wimmera and Mallee already advanced. This points to an earlier-than-usual hay season if conditions hold.
- Dry conditions inland, along with minimal frost risk in the short term, are allowing steady progress with fieldwork. Coastal areas may see light showers, but conditions remain manageable for hay operations.

- A below-average rainfall outlook from August to October is raising concerns about maintaining moisture through spring, particularly in areas that are already patchy. Catchments in parts of the Western District still need more runoff, which may limit confidence later in the season.
- Fodder availability has improved compared to last year. Producers in regions like the Wimmera are more willing to sell stored hay, which is increasing supply into the market.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -5 ($230 to $370/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($435 to $595). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 ($120 to $170/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($175 to $255/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Southeast South Australia

- Above-average rainfall from April to June, along with follow-up rain last weekend, has improved conditions across the region and helped recovery in areas that were previously very dry.
- Strong pasture growth is increasing feed availability, and high livestock prices show producers are looking to make the most of it. This is keeping demand for quality fodder steady where pasture falls short.
- Many farms are choosing to rebuild on-farm hay reserves after recent dry years. This is limiting the volume of hay coming onto the market, even with improved seasonal conditions.
- Some shift toward grain and other cash crops is expected, which may reduce the area cut for hay and tighten new season supply.
- Dry conditions inland, along with low frost risk, are allowing good progress with fieldwork. Coastal areas may see light showers, but overall conditions remain suitable for hay production.
- A below-average rainfall outlook from August to October is creating some caution about how long current feed conditions will hold, particularly into late spring.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($225 to $305/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: -10 ($390 to $530/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Straw: +/-0 ($125 to $175/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($190 to $260/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Central South Australia

- Above-average rainfall from April to June, along with recent rain, has rebuilt soil moisture across the region after a run of dry seasons. Crops are up and growing well, with solid early biomass.
- Pasture growth is strong, giving producers more grazing options. High livestock prices show producers are looking to use available feed, which is stalling hay buying for another week.
- Many growers are holding hay to rebuild on-farm reserves after low carryover from previous drought years. This is limiting the volume currently available for sale.
- Some growers are favouring grain and other cash crops. This may reduce the area cut for hay despite favourable seasonal conditions.
- A large hay crop is expected on yield. Quality will depend on spring conditions and the ability to cure hay once cut. Frost risk in the Mid North may impact crops where growth is advanced.
- Buyer activity remains slow in the domestic market. Lower quality hay is moving through export channels, while better quality lines are being held.
- Mostly sunny conditions with no immediate rainfall are allowing steady progress with crop growth and field work. A below-average rainfall outlook from August to October is creating caution heading into spring.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($245 to $305/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($430 to $550/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 ($160 to $250/t). Prices remain steady this week

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Southwest Western Australia

- Below-average rainfall from April to June has left soil moisture lower than expected across much of the region. Some isolated areas are significantly drier, which may limit early hay yields where crops did not establish well.
- June temperatures were cooler than the national trend, which has slowed growth in some areas but helped conserve existing moisture.
- Rain expected this week, particularly around Manjimup and Katanning, will improve ground conditions and give crops a lift where moisture has been lacking. This may improve hay yield potential if follow-up rain occurs.
- Strong wind warnings along the coast may affect crops and increase the risk of damage ahead of the hay season, particularly where stands are exposed.
- A below-average rainfall outlook from August to October is creating concern around finishing conditions. This may impact hay yields and quality later in the season.
- A clear shift from wheat and toward canola and other cash crops is underway, driven by strong prices. This will likely affect cereal hay production and limit supply despite seasonal variation.

- Reports from the ground suggest growers are prioritising crops with quicker financial return. This means less hay is likely to be cut, even if seasonal conditions improve.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($190 to $280/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

- Frosts have become more common after a milder June. Earlier warm conditions allowed strong pasture and crop growth, while recent frosts may slow growth rates in exposed areas.
- Coastal areas such as Smithton are seeing mild overnight temperatures with little frost risk, keeping crops in good condition. Further inland, regular showers around Waratah are building soil moisture and maintaining strong growth.
- Light showers across parts of the region are allowing fieldwork to continue, with generally dry and clear daytime conditions. This is helping maintain steady progress on farm.
- Wet paddocks in Circular Head have made forage crops harder to access, leading to increased use of hay and straw. Demand has lifted slightly, particularly for grass and cereal straw.
- Supply remains high across all key fodder types, including silage, hay and straw. This is keeping the market well supplied, with little movement in price.
- Listings show a wide range of product available, including mixed silage, hay rounds and cereal straw. Buyers have options, which is keeping competition between sellers high.
- A below-average rainfall outlook from August to October may reduce growth later in the season if conditions turn drier, particularly in areas relying on consistent follow-up rainfall.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($160 to $200/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($290 to $370/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 ($90 to $130/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($260 to $320/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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