Hay Report

18 September 2026

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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

1. Summary

1.1. Driving Prices Up

- Rising diesel and freight costs are increasing harvest and transport costs as grain and fodder crops move into harvest.
- Dry conditions in the Darling Downs, North Coast NSW and Bega Valley are reducing pasture growth and prompting buyers to bring in hay or secure stocks early.
- Hay demand is building in northwest Tasmania as cold, dry conditions slow pasture growth during calving. Premium cereal hay has risen sharply.
- Delayed cutting in the Atherton Tablelands is pushing some hay beyond feed quality, reducing the volume available for the livestock market.

1.2. Driving Prices Down

- Strong winter rainfall and stored soil moisture across southern cropping regions are setting up good cereal hay and straw production prospects.
- Favourable pasture growth and large silage reserves in Gippsland and southwest Victoria are reducing spring buying from dairy and beef farms.
- Dry weather is providing a useful hay-cutting window across several southern regions, helping growers harvest crops before quality declines.
- Carryover hay, plentiful feed supplies and lower livestock demand are making older and lower-quality hay harder to sell in central South Australia.

1.3. National Weather Summary and Outlook

- September rainfall is likely to be below average for large parts of the country, including south-western Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, northeast Tasmania, southern and central eastern Queensland.
- The long-range forecast for October to December shows that rainfall is likely to be above average across much of the west, the central regions and northeast, but below average in the southeast.
- From October to December, most of Australia is likely to be warmer than normal, with more than an 80% chance of above-average temperatures. Southern Australia is likely to experience very warm overnight temperatures, unusual for this time of year.
- Below-average root-zone soil moisture is likely for much of eastern, south-eastern and far south-western Australia during October and November. The coverage and severity of below average root zone soil moisture is likely to decrease in November.
- Overall Australia's total water storage is currently around 71%. Storages across the Murray–Darling Basin are currently 69% full; slightly less than this time last year, but up 2% since last week.

  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.

2. Regional commentary

2.1. Atherton Tablelands

- Daily showers in Atherton are keeping paddocks too unsettled for hay cutting. Mareeba is warmer and drier, but light showers are still limiting workable days.
- Some hay remains uncut and is now becoming too mature for quality feed hay. Growers may need to sell this material as mulch instead, which brings a lower return.
- Heavier rainfall along the coast has further delayed fieldwork. A drier window may arrive early next week, but growers will need several clear days to cut and bale hay.
- Delayed hay sales are reducing farm income, while high fuel costs are adding to production costs. Some growers are relying more heavily on grain crops for this season's income.
- Varroa mite detections could affect lucerne and other legume crops grown for seed, as these crops rely on pollination. Rhodes grass is not expected to face the same direct impact.
- 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.

2.2. Darling Downs

- Dalby and Toowoomba remain dry, with warm days, cool nights and no meaningful rainfall forecast in the short term. Crops, pastures and hay fields need substantial rainfall rather than isolated light falls.
- Oat crops in some areas have stopped growing due to moisture stress. Poor pasture cover after winter is also reducing feed availability and may lead to lower livestock numbers, increasing local demand for purchased fodder.
- Local hay stocks are limited. Farms needing fodder are bringing supplies in from Victoria, southern New South Wales and South Australia.
- Hay prices remain flat while growers focus on the current crop. Once local hay becomes available, pricing will depend on final yields, feed quality and buyer demand.
- Low root-zone soil moisture and limited water availability may restrict summer fodder and crop planting decisions. Rainfall that wets the soil profile and improves water inflows is needed to support sorghum, dryland cotton and summer forage establishment.
- Flower thrips remain a biosecurity watch point for Queensland crops. Any spread into fodder crops could affect production, though the immediate hay-market impact remains unclear.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($350 to $550/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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2.3. North Coast NSW

- Lismore has a mixed forecast, with dry conditions early in the week followed by cloud and possible light showers. Grafton is expected to remain warm, clear and dry, with little meaningful rainfall.
- Root-zone soil moisture is likely to remain below average through October and November. While the longer-term October to December outlook suggests above-average rainfall, hay and pasture growth need a break soon to replenish soil profiles.
- Limited stored moisture is affecting winter crop finishing and pasture growth across northern New South Wales.
- Meaningful rainfall is needed to establish summer crops and improve pasture feed. Without it, local hay supply will remain scarce and under pressure.
- Hay prices are flat, with growers focused on their current crops rather than selling hay. Local stocks are very limited, particularly inland, and livestock producers without on-farm fodder are trucking hay from Victoria, southern New South Wales, and South Australia's central and southeast districts.
- Local hay prices will depend on the quantity and quality of the new season crop, as well as buyer demand, once supply becomes available.
- 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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2.4. Central West NSW

- Forbes, Condobolin and West Wyalong are expecting dry, sunny conditions, with overnight temperatures of 0–1°C. No rainfall is forecast. Growers are looking for a top-up of rain as crops move towards hay harvest.
- Forbes growers report that the season is tracking well, despite the dry. Silage cutting for on-farm use is due to begin shortly, followed by hay harvest. However, rainfall will be increasingly important over the next three to four weeks to support hay yield as crops near cutting.
- Silage is gaining ground in livestock feeding programs. Cutting early allows growers to capture quality feed, which is important as livestock producers look closely at the value of every feed dollar.
- Central West NSW growers were well represented at the Feed Central Hay Awards despite the dry season, with one operation receiving both the NSW and National Best Visual for lucerne hay, reflecting the quality that can still be achieved in the region.
- With no rainfall forecast, buyers will be watching crop conditions closely. If dry conditions reduce hay yields, supply from the region may be lower and demand for available hay may increase.

- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -20 ($265 to $355/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($410 to $540/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: -10 ($125 to $185/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($210 to $310/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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2.5. Bega Valley

- Brief early showers have passed through Cobargo, Bega and Eden, but no further rainfall is forecast.
- The Bega Valley has had a very dry season. Bega recorded 99mm of rainfall from April to August, well below the long-term average for the same period. Local advisers say dry spells are not unusual, but concern is growing about spring rainfall and the outlook heading into autumn.
- Rainfall is likely to be below average from October to December. Root-zone soil moisture is also expected to remain below average across much of eastern and south-eastern Australia through October and November, although conditions may ease somewhat during November.
- Irrigation is helping many dairy farms maintain pasture growth and fodder reserves. Some paddocks have strong feed available, and growers remain hopeful that east coast low systems could bring useful rainfall during summer.
- Despite adequate feed on some irrigated farms, buyers are securing early hay stocks as a risk-management measure. Cereal hay from the Henty to Junee district is attracting particular interest, which may support demand for hay into the Bega Valley if dry conditions continue.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -20 ($325 to $445/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($485 to $625/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: -10 ($225 to $275/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($260 to $390/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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2.6. Goulburn/Murray Valley

- Bendigo, Cohuna and Shepparton are dry and clear, with warmer conditions expected into next week. No rainfall is forecast.
- Winter crops are generally in good shape following a wet winter and recent rainfall in parts of Victoria and southern New South Wales. Cereal hay prospects remain favourable where stored soil moisture is holding.
- However, below-average rainfall is forecast through October to December. As cereal crops move through late flowering and grain fill, they will need further moisture to maintain yield and hay quality.

- Growers report a positive start to the season, with the wet winter providing a solid base for lucerne, cereal hay and broadacre crops. Further rainfall in the coming weeks will be important to maintain hay yield and quality as crops continue to develop.
- For now, the region has potential to provide good cereal hay supply. If dry conditions continue, yields may tighten and buyers may need to secure hay earlier.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -5 ($205 to $325/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($390 to $550/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: -10 ($95 to $115/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($160 to $320/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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2.7. Gippsland

- Light showers are expected until midweek, followed by warmer and drier conditions across much of Gippsland. This is good timing for growers making an early start to hay and silage cutting, where conditions allow.
- Bulky oaten hay crops have come through a mild winter with light and infrequent frosts. Crops could produce reasonable-quality hay if growers can cut and cure it in favourable weather.
- Silage production has increased this season after favourable autumn, winter and spring conditions. Strong pasture growth and feed reserves are likely to limit spring hay buying from dairy and beef producers.
- Dairy and beef producers across Gippsland and southwest Victoria remain an important source of domestic hay demand. If dry conditions persist and pasture growth slows, buyers may return to the market for hay and silage later in the season.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -5 ($235 to $385). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($470 to $580/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: -15 ($115 to $175/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Pasture hay: -5 ($145 to $315/t). Prices decrease this week.

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2.8. Southwest Victoria

- Weather around Heywood, Hamilton and Colac remains variable, with little to no rainfall forecast in the week ahead. Drier conditions will suit growers starting hay cutting, particularly as quality will be a key market factor this season.
- Oaten hay crops are reported to be bulky after a mild winter with only light and infrequent frosts. Growers are hoping to avoid a dry finish so that quality and moisture is retained.

- Rainfall is likely to be below average from October to December. Below-average root-zone soil moisture is also forecast across parts of eastern and southeastern Australia during October and November, although conditions may improve during November.
- Winter crops across Victoria have benefited from up to 50mm of rain in some districts during the past fortnight. Wheat, barley, canola and pulse crops carry strong early-season biomass but will need further moisture through flowering and grain fill.
- Dairy and beef producers across Gippsland and southwest Victoria remain central to domestic hay demand. Favourable autumn, winter and spring conditions have built pasture and on-farm feed reserves, with spring hay demand expected to be lower.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -5 ($195 to $335/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($380 to $540). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: -15 ($100 to $150/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Pasture hay: -5 ($165 to $245/t). Prices decrease this week.

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2.9. Southeast South Australia

- Robe, Naracoorte and nearby districts are forecast to be mostly dry and cloudy this week. This may give growers a window to cut hay where crops are ready.
- Above-average rainfall is likely across much of South Australia from October to December. This could build cereal crop and fodder volumes but may interrupt hay curing.
- Wheat and barley crops have strong early-season potential after good winter rainfall and favourable establishment. Good soil moisture points to solid cereal hay and straw production.
- Frost, rapid warming or a dry finish could lower fodder yields and reduce quality. Stressed crops are unlikely to produce premium hay.
- Higher irrigation demand in nearby Sunraysia and Riverland districts may affect feed demand later in spring. Basin storage is lower than at the same time last year.
- Mouse activity is high in several South Australian cropping zones. Growers should check cereal and fodder paddocks regularly, particularly as crops move through key spring growth stages.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($210 to $290/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($350 to $510/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: -20 ($105 to $155/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($180 to $250/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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2.10. Central South Australia

- Minlaton, Jamestown, Freeling and nearby hay districts are forecast to be mostly dry and cloudy this week, with some warm days. Conditions should suit hay cutting as crops near maturity.
- Good winter rainfall has set up wheat and barley crops well, creating solid potential for cereal hay and straw. Frost, rapid warming or a long dry finish could still reduce yield and feed value.
- Barossa crops are carrying plenty of bulk, with cutting expected in two to three weeks. Some oaten hay has been affected by rain and uneven growth, which may lower feed-test results.
- Carryover hay remains a key concern. Growers need to clear old season bales before new hay comes off, but export buyers are expected to focus on fresh, high-quality fodder. With feed plentiful across southern Australia and limited livestock demand, rain-affected and lower-quality hay may be harder to move.
- Mouse activity is high across the Mid North, Lower Yorke, Eyre and SA-Victoria Mallee zones. Growers should check cereal and fodder paddocks regularly and act early to limit crop and hay yield losses.
- Significant change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -40 ($180 to $240/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($410 to $530/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 ($140 to $230/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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2.11. Southwest Western Australia

- Manjimup is forecast to have a warm week, with 20mm of rainfall expected on Friday. Katanning may receive about 9mm of rainfall. Cooler conditions and light daily showers are forecast next week, which will help replenish surface moisture ahead of spring growth.
- Root-zone soil moisture is likely to remain below average across much of far south-western WA through October and November. The area affected and the depth of the moisture shortfall are expected to ease during November.
- There is a high chance of above-average rainfall across much of WA from October to December. Timely rainfall would help maintain crop growth and pasture feed, while persistent wet weather during haymaking could affect curing and bale quality.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($190 to $280/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($540 to $740/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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2.12. Northwest Tasmania

- Cold, dry weather and drying winds are slowing grass growth in northern and north-eastern Tasmania. Dairy farms are well into calving, and some are not carrying the pasture growth they need, increasing interest in silage and drier fodder options.
- Below-average root-zone soil moisture is likely across parts of eastern and south-eastern Australia during October and November. Tasmania is also likely to receive below-average rainfall from October to December, which could tighten pasture and fodder supplies if follow-up rainfall does not arrive.
- Demand for hay is building in the north-west. Premium oaten hay is being carted into Circular Head dairy districts at about $280 per tonne. Cereal hay is trading around $240 to $260 per tonne, lucerne around $340 per tonne, and new season lucerne is expected to be available in about three weeks at around $360 per tonne. Straw demand remains flat while higher-nutrient fodder is available.
- Buyers are showing more interest in lucerne, pasture hay and clover hay as they look for drier feed than grass silage. However, new lucerne crops are still two to three weeks from cutting, and growers will need a dry harvest window to protect quality. There is some carryover hay, but demand could lift quickly if dry conditions continue.
- Significant change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +70 ($230 to $270/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +10 ($300 to $380/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 ($100 to $120/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($240 to $260/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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