

Hay Report

02 October 2026



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1. Summary

1.1. Driving Prices Up

- Dry conditions across the Darling Downs, North Coast NSW, Bega Valley and Gippsland are curbing pasture growth and increasing supplementary feeding needs.
- Hay and silage output is likely to fall in southwest Victoria, where dry conditions have reduced the area likely to be cut for fodder.
- Rain-damaged crops and few baling opportunities have left quality hay scarce on the Atherton Tablelands.
- Lucerne remains hard to source in northwest Tasmania as dairy, beef and sheep producers seek top-up fodder. While prices haven't increased yet, it may be imminent.
- Rising urea, fuel and silage wrap costs are again raising producer concerns and may increase the cost of making and storing fodder.

1.2. Driving Prices Down

- Strong winter growth across northern Victoria, southern NSW (Riverina) and South Australia points to a larger new-season hay crop entering the market.
- More barley may be cut for hay where grain returns are low or yields are under threat, adding cereal hay volumes in several regions.
- New-season supply is already building across southern markets, contributing to lower cereal hay, lucerne, straw and pasture hay values.
- Buyers are delaying purchases until harvest progresses and new-season pricing is clearer. Lower export hay price expectations are also weighing on local values.

1.3. National Weather Summary and Outlook

- September was notably dry across much of southeastern Australia, with parts of southeast Queensland, eastern NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and southwest WA recording below-average rainfall.
- Root-zone soil moisture remains very much below average across key agricultural regions of south-east Queensland, eastern NSW, eastern and southern Victoria, northern and northeastern Tasmania, and southwest WA.
- For October to December, above-average rainfall is likely across much of western and central Australia. Below-average rainfall is more likely in the southeast and far north, while much of eastern Australia has roughly equal chances of above- or below-average rainfall.
- Warmer-than-average days and nights are likely across most of Australia from October to December. There is an 80% or greater chance of unusually high maximum temperatures across large areas of NSW, most of Victoria and Tasmania, eastern SA and southwest WA.

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

- Light rain and cloudy conditions are delaying harvest and have further damaged already rain-affected crops. Some hay is now only suitable for mulch-grade markets.
- Producers need a run of dry weather from Monday to harvest standing crops and bale planned areas. Mareeba is faring better, with warmer conditions and only light drizzle forecast through Sunday.
- Hay is scarce, particularly suitable horse hay. Wet conditions have limited baling opportunities and reduced the volume of quality hay available.
- Lower-quality cattle-grade Rhodes Grass hay is changing hands at around \$100/t, with some buyers accepting poorer hay where feed options are limited.
- Local growers are working together to windrow and bale whenever conditions allow. Contract baling work is providing some income after a season of wet weather and poor crop outcomes. Wheat is also nearing harvest, but damp conditions may require batch drying rather than paddock drying.
- 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

- Root-zone soil moisture remains well below average, with no meaningful rainfall forecast. Light showers expected from Monday may offer short-term relief but will not rebuild soil moisture profiles.
- Dry conditions are reducing winter grain and pulse yield prospects as wheat and chickpeas enter key growth stages. Significant areas of barley have been cut for hay rather than grain, adding to local hay production.
- The volume of new-crop grain available to feed markets is shrinking as crops are cut for hay or yield less than expected. Feedlots are increasingly uncertain about securing local grain supplies.
- Livestock producers across the Darling Downs and surrounding southern Queensland districts continue to destock. The region is likely to be a key demand area for hay if dry conditions persist.
- Buyers are holding off purchases while they wait for the main hay season and clearer pricing. Lower export hay price expectations are also influencing market sentiment.
- 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

- Warm, dry conditions continue across much of the region, particularly around Kyogle and Casino, after months of limited rainfall. Light showers forecast from Monday will be welcome but are unlikely to correct the soil moisture deficit.
- Inland areas remain very dry, with below-average root-zone moisture affecting winter grain and pulse yield potential. Producers need effective rainfall soon for summer crop planting and pasture growth.
- Very dry conditions in nearby New England are driving sheep and cattle destocking, with higher temperatures and dry vegetation also increasing fire risk. This may increase hay demand across northern New South Wales if conditions persist.
- Some barley near the Queensland border has been cut for hay as grain yield prospects decline. This will add hay to the market, while reducing the supply of local new-crop grain for feedlots.
- Local conditions are mixed. Silage is being made around Lismore where crops are better suited to ensiling, while producers elsewhere are waiting for rain and assessing feed needs. Buyers remain cautious ahead of the main hay season and are watching new-season pricing.
- 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

- Frost has affected crops on the southern and eastern fringes of Central West NSW and across the nearby outer slopes of south-central NSW. Damage is expected to be limited if overnight temperatures remain above freezing. However, if crops lose further yield potential as conditions dry, some local barley may be cut for hay rather than taken through to grain harvest.
- Hot conditions are increasing moisture stress, with temperatures forecast to reach 32°C around Condobolin and 30°C at Forbes. Soil moisture profiles remain at critical levels.
- Growers continue to report that the season is tracking well, despite the dry. Silage cutting for on-farm use has begun, with hay harvest imminent. However, rainfall will be increasingly important over the next three to four weeks to support hay yield as crops near cutting.
- Forecast rainfall of 15–20mm at Condobolin, Forbes and Parkes on Friday and Saturday would help rebuild soil moisture. However, rain during harvest may interrupt operations.
- Grain analysts see similarities to 2015 and 2023, when widespread rain fell in November. It is too early to know whether this pattern will repeat, but rain after hay is baled and stored should have limited impact on quality.
- Cereal hay and straw prices continue to decline week on week.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -10 (\$255 to \$345/t). Prices decrease this week.

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

- Lucerne hay: -5 (\$405 to \$535/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Straw: -10 (\$115 to \$175/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Pasture hay: -25 (\$180 to \$290/t). Prices decrease this week.

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2.5. Bega Valley

- September rainfall has been below average across much of eastern New South Wales, with some areas recording 50–100mm less than average. This has reduced pasture growth and increased the need for supplementary hay feeding.
- The season has similarities to 2015 and 2023, when wet weather fell across New South Wales and much of northern Victoria in November. It is too early to know whether this pattern will repeat, but rain after hay is baled and stored should have limited impact on hay quality.
- Producers toward the Snowy Mountains report severe feed pressure after several weeks without meaningful rainfall. Warm days and northerly spring winds have dried remaining green feed, with some farmers already feeding hay and considering livestock sales if conditions do not improve. This will add to local hay demand.
- Rainfall forecast for Friday and Saturday is welcome, with Bega likely to receive up to 20mm of rain each day after temperatures reach 31°C late in the week. Follow-up showers next week are expected to be light and may not meaningfully rebuild soil moisture. Cooma is forecast to receive lower rainfall totals, although any rainfall will assist pasture and reduce immediate pressure on hay reserves.
- Bega Valley is expected to be an area with increased hay demand this season. Many buyers are delaying purchases until more new-season hay reaches the market, hoping prices soften. Export hay price expectations are also easing, with exporters communicating lower price outlooks to contracted growers.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$325 to \$445/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: -5 (\$480 to \$620/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Straw: -10 (\$215 to \$265/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Pasture hay: -25 (\$235 to \$365/t). Prices decrease this week.

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2.6. Goulburn/Murray Valley

- Hay crops across northern Victoria, southern New South Wales and South Australia are benefiting from an exceptional winter season. Above-average rainfall has lifted yield potential, which may improve fodder availability for areas facing dry pasture conditions.
- Some barley growers are considering cutting crops for hay as grain prices sit at four-year lows and crop yields are forecast to be very high. This could add to hay supply if growers decide hay returns are more reliable than grain returns.

- The season has similarities to 2015 and 2023, when wet weather fell across New South Wales and much of northern Victoria in November. It is too early to know whether this pattern will repeat, but rain after hay is baled and stored should have limited impact on hay quality.
- Rain is forecast across the region late in the week and over the weekend, with Elmore and Bendigo expecting up to 30mm of rainfall on Friday. Many growers will wait to assess rainfall totals before committing to cutting next week.
- Minor to moderate flooding is possible across parts of north-east, central and Gippsland Victoria. Flooding or further heavy rain may delay cutting and affect crop access.
- Around Rochester, some growers are preparing to cut next week if rainfall allows. Others expect mowing to start in around two weeks. Excess moisture has led to some paddock losses, while heavy crop yields may make it harder to retain quality as crops move beyond their ideal cutting stage. This has growers weighing strong production prospects against uncertain hay prices.
- Straw prices have fallen to their lowest level since January. At current levels, returns are close to the cost of labour, urea and fuel, limiting the incentive for growers to produce straw.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -15 (\$190 to \$310/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: -20 (\$370 to \$530/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Straw: -10 (\$85 to \$105/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Pasture hay: -25 (\$160 to \$320/t). Prices decrease this week.

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2.7. Gippsland

- September rainfall has been below average across much of southern Victoria, with some areas recording 50–100mm less than average. Root-zone soil moisture remains well below average across the south and east of Gippsland, limiting pasture growth and increasing reliance on stored fodder.
- Gippsland received 10–25mm of rainfall last week, which has provided only limited relief from moisture deficits. Unseasonably warm October conditions are increasing demand for irrigation and stored water, particularly where pastures are already under pressure.
- Graziers in eastern Gippsland and the high country report some of the driest spring conditions in decades. At Ensay, producers have recorded about 355mm of rainfall for the year, compared with an annual average of about 635mm. Feed pressure is building and destocking activity appears to be increasing, which may lift demand for hay where livestock are retained.
- Conditions have also deteriorated across more reliable grazing areas, including Staceys Bridge and Yarram. Producers are hopeful that forecast rain will support clover and pasture recovery, but further rainfall will be needed to rebuild soil moisture and ease hay demand.
- Rain forecast across Gippsland late this week and into the weekend will be closely watched by hay growers. Many are waiting to assess rainfall totals before deciding whether to begin cutting next week.
- It may also bring minor to moderate flooding across parts of Gippsland. This could delay hay cutting, restrict paddock access and affect crop quality where crops are ready for harvest.

- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -15 (\$220 to \$370). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: -20 (\$450 to \$560/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$115 to \$175/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: -15 (\$130 to \$300/t). Prices decrease this week.

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2.8. Southwest Victoria

- Rainfall has been well below average along the coastal strip from Millicent to Warrnambool. From Dartmoor to Cobden, rainfall to 27 September was around one-third of the median. Soil moisture, pasture growth and farm water supplies are under increasing pressure.
- Rain forecast late this week will be important. Hamilton may receive up to 25mm of rain on Thursday and Friday, while heavier falls are possible around Colac. This may boost pasture and fodder crops, but further rainfall will be needed to improve the seasonal outlook.
- Hay and silage production is expected to fall. Near Condah, only about half the paddocks set aside for fodder are likely to be cut for silage, and few growers expect to make hay after silage. This will reduce local hay supply.
- Carryover silage from last season is providing a buffer for many livestock producers. However, some farmers are already buying lower-cost vetch hay from towards the Wimmera to build reserves ahead of summer.
- Southwest Victoria is emerging as a potential hay demand area. Buyers are waiting for more new-season hay to enter the market before purchasing, while lower export price expectations may place downward pressure on local hay prices.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -15 (\$180 to \$320/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: -20 (\$360 to \$520). Prices decrease this week.
- Straw: -10 (\$90 to \$140/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Pasture hay: -10 (\$155 to \$235/t). Prices decrease this week.

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2.9. Southeast South Australia

- Hay crops across South Australia are benefiting from above-average winter rainfall and good establishment conditions. Wheat, barley, canola and lentil crops are advanced for this time of year, with stored soil moisture suggesting strong yields. This may increase hay availability for regions facing dry pasture conditions.
- A dry, rapidly warming finish or frost events could still reduce crop yields and hay quality. Growers will be watching spring conditions before deciding whether crops are best suited to grain or hay.

- Winter rainfall was the highest on record near the South Australia–New South Wales border. Around Robe and Naracoorte, regular rainfall and mild temperatures are maintaining crop growth. Continued rain may delay hay cutting and marginally reduce quality where crops are ready for harvest.
- Soil moisture is declining along the coastal strip from Millicent through to southwest Victoria. This may increase local fodder buying interest if pasture conditions continue to deteriorate, despite stronger crop prospects further inland.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: -5 (\$205 to \$285/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$350 to \$510/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: -10 (\$95 to \$145/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

- Above-average winter rainfall and good establishment conditions have created strong hay prospects across central South Australia. Crops are advanced, with stored soil moisture giving growers a solid base heading into spring.
- Frost, rapid warming or a dry finish could still affect final hay yields and quality. However, current conditions point to a much larger hay crop than last season.
- Rain late this week is expected to clear for the weekend and into next week across the region. Cooler, drier conditions will suit hay curing and allow harvest to continue where crops are ready.
- Hay harvest has begun. One Whyte Yarcowie grower has made 1,000 bales of clover and medic hay, pausing after 4mm of rain on Wednesday. Nearby Yorktown received 14mm rainfall, while other areas were drier.
- Oaten export hay harvest has finished further north of Whyte Yarcowie, yielding about 9 tonnes per hectare, compared with about 4.5 tonnes per hectare last year. Growers are focused on making hay at present, with new-season supply expected to move towards drier livestock areas as harvest progresses.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$180 to \$240/t). Prices remain steady 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

- Much of the grain belt remains dry, with root-zone soil moisture well below average and September rainfall 50–100mm below average in parts of the region. Warm, mostly dry conditions are continuing around Katanning, which is helping field work but leaving little reserve in soil profiles.

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- Canola is flowering or setting pods, while cereal crops are moving through key yield stages. Further rainfall will be important for grain fill and may also improve late hay yield potential. Warm days and nights will increase crop water use.
- Conditions vary across the region. Manjimup has light showers forecast, while recent falls of up to 70mm of rain in parts of the eastern grain belt have improved the outlook for crops around Merredin and north-east of the region.
- Some hay crops were cut early in mid-September due to dry conditions. These crops may have yielded less than they would have if they had remained standing for the recent rain. Hay growers will be watching October rainfall closely, as ongoing dry conditions could limit further hay production and increase demand from local livestock producers.
- 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

- Below-average winter and September rainfall has left soil moisture well below average across northern Tasmania. Dryland crops need follow-up rain, while irrigated crops are performing well.
- Rain is forecast through late week and into next week. Light showers around Smithton and Waratah are expected to increase on Tuesday. This will help pasture and silage crops but may delay dry hay cutting and baling.
- Four consecutive frosts last week have left growers concerned as many crops were at peak growth stages. Crop development and harvest planning remain behind mainland southern regions, typical of the season. Canola is flowering and oats are establishing well, although dryland crops will need follow-up rain to maintain their potential.
- Silage production is still in its early stages. Growers are looking for at least three consecutive days with temperatures in the low to mid-20s before cutting begins. Current rain may improve crop growth, but suitable drying conditions will be needed before widespread silage harvest can start. There is concern about silage wrapping costs, and contractors are trying to on-sell baled fodder as an option.
- Lucerne enquiries are increasing from Southern Midlands beef, sheep and dairy farms. Demand is centred on feed for cows and calves, and ewes and lambs, while dairies seek top-up fodder as production increases. Available lucerne is scarce, although sellers are waiting to see the effect of upcoming rain before changing prices.
- Hay prices are steady for now. Market expectations are for new-season cereal hay to enter from mid-November, with indicative values of \$300 per tonne or more for cereal hay, more than \$180 per tonne for straw, and \$200–\$240 per tonne for pasture hay, depending on quality. Final pricing will depend on spring rainfall, yields and the volume of hay available after silage season.
- No change to pricing this week.

- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$230 to \$270/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$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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1800 004 377
dairyaustralia.com.au

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