Dairy Australia

Hay Report

20 March 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

- Lucerne prices have increased across parts of NSW and VIC due to steady autumn demand for quality hay. A reported sharp rise in Darling Downs may be an anomaly and is being monitored.
- Very dry conditions across northeastern and central NSW are increasing reliance on stored hay and supporting demand.
- Northern buyers are sourcing quality hay from VIC and SA, increasing interstate competition.
- Mustering and cattle moving through QLD as the dry season approaches is expected to lift hay demand in coming weeks.
- Fuel prices are rising daily. Freight costs are increasing, directly lifting delivered hay prices, especially on interstate loads.
- Cautious planting in parts of SA, combined with drought in northern WA, may reduce later-season supply if autumn rainfall remains limited.

Driving Prices Down

- Pasture hay prices have eased in southern regions where on-farm reserves are adequate and local buying is quieter.
- Cereal hay and straw are plentiful in most southern markets, keeping base prices steady.
- High freight costs are limiting some interstate trade, with buyers stepping back when transport makes delivered prices unworkable.
- Uncertain autumn rainfall outlooks are leading to measured, needs-based purchasing rather than aggressive restocking.

National weather summary and outlook

- April–June rainfall is likely to be below average across NSW, VIC, SA and WA hay regions, with an increased risk of unusually low rainfall across the Murray-Darling Basin and TAS.
- Root-zone soil moisture remains below average in northeastern NSW and parts of WA, maintaining fodder risk in these areas.
- Murray-Darling Basin storages are at 50 per cent capacity, below last year's levels, which may affect irrigation outlook across southern NSW, northern VIC and SA.
- Above-average autumn temperatures are likely across most hay regions, increasing evaporation and the risk of a dry start to the cool season.
- Flood risk remains in northern QLD, with potential short-term disruption to freight and supply chains.

*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

- December to February rainfall was above average to very much above average across the north of the region, with several flooding events. Soil moisture remains above average to very much above average.
- Continued rainfall has kept flood watches and warnings in place, restricting paddock access and delaying autumn sowing and hay program preparation. Falls of up to 35mm of rain in Atherton this week will further delay fieldwork and compress planting windows.
- The April to June outlook shows a roughly equal chance of above- or below-average rainfall, with low forecast confidence. This is adding uncertainty to planning.
- Local growers report that persistent rainfall over the past two months has disrupted corn planting, with some reducing their intended area after missing key planting windows. This may limit silage supply and reduce later-season fodder availability.
- High urea and fuel costs are tightening margins. Some growers are conserving fertiliser stocks rather than applying in saturated conditions. Lower fertiliser use may affect crop performance and hay yields.
- Rhodes grass growers are behind schedule, and paddocks remain too wet to access. Concerns around a potential cyclone are also limiting the opportunity to cut early. If high winds and heavy rainfall occur, both standing corn and Rhodes crops could be flattened, reducing yield and affecting hay quality. Wet-harvesting conditions would also increase the risk of contamination and production losses.
- Ongoing delays and weather risk may reduce final production volumes, potentially leading to a tightening of the later-season hay supply rather than immediate price movement.
- 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

- Up to 300mm of recent rainfall across the western Downs has disrupted mustering plans and transport. As conditions dry into late March and early April, mustering and weaning will commence, with cattle moving off the Downs. This is expected to lift hay demand heading into the dry season.
- April to May marks the dry season in Queensland. With central and western Queensland receiving recent rain, cattle are currently utilising ground cover. As mustering progresses and cattle are relocated, demand for hay is likely to increase.
- December to February rainfall in the north was well above average, and soil moisture was also above average. The south remains below average. This uneven profile is creating mixed pasture growth and variable hay demand across the region.

- The April to June outlook shows a low chance of exceeding average rainfall, with low to moderate confidence. If dry conditions persist, autumn forage establishment may be limited, and winter hay demand could strengthen.
- Farmers are topping up fodder reserves now and securing supply ahead of winter. Growers report good availability of cereal hay, including millet, around $350 per tonne ex farm. Pasture hay is trading between $220 and $270 per tonne ex farm.
- Lucerne is trading up to $700 per tonne, where available in the region. Pricing can vary between growers and contractors and will depend on quality and freight. We will continue to monitor the market as supply and winter demand become clearer.
- Buyers continue sourcing Victorian vetch around $440 per tonne ex farm, with tight vetch supply in Victoria influencing buying decisions.
- Rising fuel and urea prices remain a concern. As freight accounts for around 25 per cent of delivered cost, buyers should factor true fuel increases into pricing.
- Tara is forecast to receive 3 to 5mm of rainfall over the weekend, offering minor topsoil moisture with limited immediate impact on feed supply.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($300 to $400/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +150 ($600 to $700/t). Prices increase this week.:
- Straw: +/-0 ($150 to $200/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: -5 ($220 to $270/t). Prices decrease this week.

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North Coast NSW

- Rainfall from December to February fell below average across much of the North Coast, and soil moisture remains below average. The April to June outlook gives equal chances of above- or below-average rainfall, with low confidence. Without follow-up rainfall, pasture growth will remain limited, and hay supply will remain tight.
- Local hay stocks are low. Buyers are actively looking north into Queensland and south into Victoria to secure supply.
- Victorian sellers are offering good-quality hay and are starting to move shedded product to free up cash flow. Ex-farm prices may soften slightly, but freight will keep delivered prices high on the North Coast and limit any real relief for buyers.
- Dry conditions in northwest NSW have pushed early cattle turnoff and agistment. As stock leaves, local hay demand has eased in those areas. However, demand remains strong in drier parts of NSW, including New England, which is supporting hay movement within the state.
- Lismore is forecast to receive up to 15mm of rain daily next week under warm, cloudy conditions. This rainfall will replenish topsoil moisture. Producers will need further rainfall to recharge root-zone moisture and boost pasture growth.
- 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

- Northeastern NSW remains extremely dry, with Gunnedah and Tamworth recording only 12mm in the past two months. Root-zone soil moisture across the Namoi, Gwydir and Clarence catchments is in the lowest 5 per cent of records.
- There is little interest locally in growing hay as a cash crop due to nutrient removal and soil compaction. Buyers around Tamworth are sourcing Victorian vetch at about $440 per tonne ex farm, with lucerne at a $120 per tonne premium. Tight Victorian vetch supply is influencing purchasing.
- The April to June outlook shows an increased chance of below-average rainfall across parts of the central west and the Murray-Darling Basin. This may restrict autumn pasture recovery and early fodder crop growth, increasing reliance on stored hay heading into winter.
- Cattle movement toward western districts, including Broken Hill, may lift hay demand in receiving areas if follow-up rainfall is not secured.
- Saleyard numbers have risen as processors seek cattle amid disruptions in Queensland. Seasonal conditions over the next month will determine whether producers turn off stock or retain and feed through autumn.
- Warm, cloudy days with light showers of up to 5mm in Forbes over the next weej will refresh topsoil but will not improve deeper moisture. Sustained rainfall is needed to ease hay pressure.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($280 to $380/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +15 ($430 to $560/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 ($110 to $175/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +25 ($205 to $305/t). Prices increase this week.

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Bega Valley

- Rainfall from December to February was mostly below average across the zone, though soil moisture is currently around average. This reflects some recent moisture support, but pasture growth remains sensitive to follow-up rainfall.

- The April to June outlook shows an equal chance of above- or below-average rainfall for coastal NSW, with low confidence. This keeps autumn pasture and fodder planning uncertain, but producers remain hopeful.
- Increasing showers this week, combined with warm conditions in the low to mid 20s, will help replenish topsoil moisture ahead of autumn sowing. Follow-up rainfall will be important to support pasture growth and limit early winter hay demand.
- Lucerne prices have risen for the first time in several weeks, while key hay types remain stagnant.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($345 to $465/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +15 ($505 to $645/t). Prices increase 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

- Recent widespread rainfall has improved soil moisture after a prolonged dry period, making conditions ideal for autumn sowing. The April to June outlook shows a low chance of above-average rainfall, so if follow-up rain is limited, pasture growth may ease, and hay demand is likely to remain supported.
- More than 4,000 straw bales have been used for sediment control across the region after recent heavy rainfall, helping move through excess straw, per reports.
- Some growers report a strong hay and silage season overall, despite a tight and uncertain start. Weather windows were narrow, and demand lifted quickly following fire losses. This shows how quickly supply can tighten during seasonal shocks.
- Recent rainfall has improved pasture colour across parts of the region. However, feed quality remains low. Until pasture nutrition improves, hay demand is expected to remain steady, particularly in fire-affected districts.
- In areas like Cohuna, Heathcote and Kyabram, warm days in the mid to high 20s and drying conditions are supporting groundwork and autumn sowing preparations. If conditions hold, this may support early crop establishment and help stabilise hay demand heading into winter.
- After a period of flat pricing, lucerne has lifted again this week, supported by fresh irrigated cuts entering the market.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($245 to $365/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +15 ($415 to $575/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 ($95 to $115/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: -20 ($170 to $330/t). Prices decrease this week.

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Gippsland

- Summer rainfall was mostly average, though drier along the south-eastern coast. The April to June outlook shows a low chance of above-average rainfall. This may limit further pasture recovery and keep hay enquiry steady as producers assess autumn growth.
- Follow-up rainfall after the early autumn break has supported pasture growth across the region. Falls reached 27mm of rain at Jindivick and Lake Eildon, with 24mm at Warragul. This has freshened the paddocks and triggered a flush of weeds, but further rainfall will be needed to sustain pasture growth and ease hay demand in the longer term.
- Increased southern processor activity reflects tighter slaughter supply in the north. Seasonal conditions across southern NSW and Victoria will influence whether producers retain stock and maintain hay demand through late autumn.
- Hay moved into central north Victoria through recent relief efforts may tighten supply in parts of Gippsland, depending on where the product was sourced.
- Pasture response will depend on follow-up rainfall. Where feed quality remains limited, supplementary feeding is likely to continue in the short term, supporting local hay demand.
- Areas including Meeniyan and Warragul will see partly cloudy conditions in the low 20s into next week. Lindenow may receive light rainfall, which will refresh the topsoil only. Sustained rainfall will be needed to further bed down root-zone moisture.
- After a month of flat pricing, lucerne has lifted again this week, on the back of fresh irrigated cuts entering the market. Pasture hay has declined due to reported plentiful local supply.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($275 to $425). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +15 ($495 to $605/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 ($120 to $180/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: -20 ($160 to $330/t). Prices decrease this week.

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Southwest Victoria

- The southwest Victorian hay market is softer for sellers this autumn. Late and generous rainfall has left most farms with solid hay and silage reserves. Unlike last year's shortages, there are few feed gaps and limited local buying activity.
- Areas around Lake Bolac received 15 to 20mm of rainfall earlier this month and a further 5mm this week, with some districts recording 80 to 100mm of rainfall. This rain has supported pasture and established winter cropping programs, although many northern paddocks remain in a longer-term rainfall deficit. The April to June outlook shows a low chance of exceeding average rainfall, so hay demand will depend on follow-up autumn rainfall.

- Enquiries from northern NSW are targeting southwest Victoria for supply. However, rising freight costs may restrict movement and keep delivered prices firm in those markets.
- Southern processors have lifted grid prices by up to 30 cents per kilogram due to tighter livestock supply. If producers hold stock to add weight, supplementary hay demand may lift, particularly if pasture growth slows.
- Fire recovery efforts continue to draw hay into parts of central Victoria, which may affect local availability depending on supply and freight pathways.
- Hamilton and Koroit are experiencing mild conditions in the low to mid 20s with no rainfall forecast, supporting fieldwork and autumn sowing preparation.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($265 to $405/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +15 ($425 to $585). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +/-0 ($105 to $155/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: -20 ($180 to $260/t). Prices decrease this week.

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Southeast South Australia

- Above-average late February rainfall has lifted soil moisture after a dry period. Mixed farmers have established early grazing and dual-purpose crops, improving ground cover across the South East. This has reduced short-term reliance on pasture hay. With plentiful local supply available, pasture hay prices have eased.
- The April to June outlook shows a low chance of exceeding average rainfall. Follow-up rainfall will be critical to carry pasture through winter. Without it, growth will slow, and supplementary hay demand will lift.
- Some producers are looking to secure additional cattle as conditions improve. If rainfall does not continue, higher livestock numbers will increase feeding pressure and lift hay enquiry.
- Northern buyers, particularly from the North Coast NSW, where fodder supplies have been eaten down under dry conditions, are making enquiries into South Australia. This supports interstate interest in local hay. However, rising fuel costs are pushing freight rates higher. Increasing transport costs will affect delivered pricing and may limit how far hay moves.
- Recent heavy rainfall has cleared. Naracoorte and Tintinara are forecast to be warm in the high 20s with sunny to partly sunny conditions and no rainfall expected this week. Producers are using the dry window to progress autumn sowing and fieldwork.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($255 to $335/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($430 to $570/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: -5 ($125 to $175/t). Prices decrease this week.
- Pasture hay: -35 ($225 to $295/t). Prices decrease this week.

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Central South Australia

- Above-average late summer rainfall has improved soil moisture, supporting early grazing and dual-purpose crop planting. However, the April to June outlook shows a low chance of exceeding average rainfall. Follow-up rainfall will be essential to sustain autumn growth and limit winter hay demand.
- Dry summer conditions prior to these rains limited subsoil moisture reserves. Even with recent rainfall, full-profile replenishment is not guaranteed. Hay programs will rely heavily on continued autumn rainfall to support strong winter crop establishment.
- Growers remain cautious despite improved seasonal confidence. Rising fuel and fertiliser costs are influencing planting decisions and what growers are prepared to carry. Conservative planting may tighten future hay supply if conditions turn dry later in the season.
- In the north of the region, Jamestown, and further south, Clare, are forecast to be warm in the mid to high 20s with no rainfall expected next week. With floodwaters now receded and soils improving, conditions are suitable for fieldwork and sowing.
- Northern buyers, particularly from the North Coast of NSW, are showing interest in South Australian hay, with enquiries into Central SA districts. However, rising fuel costs are lifting freight rates. Higher transport costs will affect delivered prices and may limit interstate movement if margins tighten.
- 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

- December to February rainfall sat below to well below average across most of the zone, with isolated above average falls along ex-tropical cyclone Mitchell's track. Soil moisture remains below average in the far southwest and closer to average elsewhere. The April to June outlook shows a low chance of exceeding average rainfall. This keeps autumn crop establishment and hay outlook cautious.
- Northern pastoral regions are entering a third year of drought, with some areas recording only 60 millimetres of rainfall last year. Emergency fodder demand remains strong. Thousands of donated bales are sitting in Esperance, but high diesel costs are preventing movement north.
- Fuel supply is tight. Growers report that metro areas are being prioritised. Road train rule changes may help, but overall diesel availability remains uncertain. This creates risk heading into seeding and may influence planting scale and hay programs.

- If fuel access improves and freight becomes viable, more hay will move north. That will tighten supply in the southwest and support local pricing. High diesel costs are already lifting freight rates and delivered hay values.
- 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 April to June is likely to be below average across northern Tasmania. A drier outlook will slow pasture growth and support ongoing hay demand through late autumn.
- December to February rainfall was mostly below average. Soil moisture is currently average. The April to June forecast shows a low chance of above-average rainfall, with low to moderate confidence. This keeps feed demand firm if rainfall does not improve.
- In Smithton, conditions are clear into next week with temperatures in the low 20s and little chance of rain. Around 50mm of rain has fallen recently, but local contractors report at least another 50mm is needed to reduce irrigation use and diesel costs. Supplementary feeding remains in place.
- Local contractors report hay prices are holding steady. Rising freight costs are limiting trade, with some buyers pulling back once freight is added. Demand is present but price sensitive.
- Good quality grass and clover hay is trading where available. Silage supply has tightened due to freight costs. Overall, hay demand remains steady while conditions stay dry and costs remain high.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($200 to $260/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($300 to $380/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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