

Hay Report

22 May 2026

DELIVERING
for DAIRY



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Summary

Driving Prices Up

- Dry conditions in southern Qld and inland NSW are keeping livestock on hay for longer, lifting winter demand.
- Low soil moisture is limiting winter fodder cropping on the Darling Downs and in parts of Central West NSW, tightening future supply.
- Wet and flood-affected paddocks on the North Coast NSW are delaying sowing and pushing greater reliance on brought-in hay.
- Mixed quality after the wet season in the Atherton Tablelands may shift more product into mulch, reducing feed-grade supply.
- Hay and grain are being drawn northward into drier areas, steadily depleting available stocks.
- Freight and fuel costs are lifting delivered pricing and limiting movement into distant markets.

Driving Prices Down

- May rainfall across southern regions has improved feed conditions and reduced urgent buying.
- Surplus stored fodder across Victoria and SA is keeping buyer urgency low.
- Seeding progress is well advanced in the south, adding confidence to new-season supply.
- Destocking in parts of northern NSW and Qld may reduce overall winter demand.
- Good silage availability in Northwest Tas is keeping silage in rations and limiting hay demand.
- Rising input bills and cash flow pressure may prompt additional hay sales, adding supply.

National Weather Summary and Outlook

- Year-to-date rainfall is more than 200 mm above average across large parts of northern and central Australia. It is more than 100 mm below average across eastern NSW, Tasmania and the Pilbara.
- The June to August forecast indicates below-average rainfall across much of the Australian wheatbelt.
- The drier outlook strengthens later in the June to August period.
- The June to August forecast indicates above-average temperatures across most of Australia.
- Frost remains possible in colder districts and can slow winter pasture growth.

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 and warmer conditions in Mareeba and Atherton are providing a much-needed window for paddocks, supporting cutting activity and allowing delayed sowing to resume.
- Ongoing wet conditions have affected planting activity, with many growers relying on crops already in the ground, which may limit additional hay supply later in the season.
- Local reports indicate enquiries to cut hay are increasing, including dairy buyers seeking smaller parcels, as feed users look to secure winter supply.
- Quality remains mixed after a wet season, with variable silage weight and some low-grade product expected to move into mulch markets rather than feed-grade lines.
- Freight costs are slowing sales and lifting delivered pricing, with reports of Brisbane freight near \$400 per 1200 x 1200 pallet, limiting competitive movement into distant markets.
- 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

- Ongoing dry conditions and below-average soil moisture are limiting pasture growth, driving reductions in stock and increasing reliance on supplementary feeding through winter.
- Demand remains strong for cereal hay across a wide quality range, as producers secure feed to carry remaining livestock through the colder months.
- Livestock continue to move onto agistment in western Queensland and along the northern stock route, which is shifting local buying patterns but not easing underlying feed demand.
- No rain is forecast for the coming week around Toowoomba, with mild, sunny conditions expected, which supports day-to-day feeding and livestock management but does not improve soil moisture.
- Irrigated growers are planting oats and barley, but low soil moisture across the Downs and Granite Belt is constraining winter cropping. This may reduce locally produced fodder supply later in winter.
- 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

- Forecast rainfall this week is 25 to 50 mm of rain across NSW, with above 50 mm of rain forecast for parts of the North Coast and New England.
- This rain should help some paddocks short term, but it will be too late to make a meaningful difference to winter feed.
- Conditions remain mixed. Lismore has had continuous May rain and flooding, and more daily rain is expected into next week. This is delaying sowing and paddock work, especially around the Wilsons and Richmond rivers.
- Destocking continues in the drier parts of northern NSW due to limited pasture growth. Any stock remaining on farm will now be fed through winter.
- Brokers report dry conditions are using up local hay and grain, with Victorian hay moving as far as New England.
- Pricing is still location-dependent. Tropical grass round bales are reported at \$100 to \$150 per bale locally, and soybean silage at \$150 to \$200 per round bale in wetter zones. Fuel and freight continue to influence delivered 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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Central West NSW

- Recent rainfall has helped in some areas after a dry 2026, with Forbes recording 10 mm last week and 63 mm month to date.
- The outlook from June to August is below-average rainfall, following well below-average rainfall from February to April.
- Soil moisture remains below average, including areas on the north-east margins sitting in the lowest 1 percent. More showers are forecast (Forbes and Condobolin from Sunday, Dubbo from Monday at 1 to 4 mm of rainfall daily, and Moree from Tuesday), but it is not enough to change the winter feed outlook.
- The first northwest cloud band of 2026 delivered rain into parts of the region after a very dry start to the year, but most growers are still working with limited stored moisture.

- Brokers report grain growers around Coonamble and Quambone are unlikely to plant forage crops. Even with this rain, paddocks are still too dry, and late planting brings high input costs and added risk.
- Destocking continues. Any livestock remaining on farm will now be fed through winter. Brokers also report northern NSW demand is drawing down hay and grain, with Victorian hay moving as far as New England.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$330 to \$420/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$460 to \$590/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$145 to \$205/t). Prices remain steady 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 delivered widespread rainfall, including into the Bega Valley, last weekend. Continued rain across southern and eastern Australia through May has improved crop and livestock feed conditions.
- Hay demand is slow with plenty of stored fodder still available. Some continues to move north into drier regions.
- Further rain forecast in the coming days is expected to strengthen crop prospects the southern half of NSW. As top-dressing and post-emergent spray programs ramp up, urea and chemical demand is lifting, and some growers are seeking cash flow to cover rising input bills.
- Seeding across southern NSW is around 50 to 80 percent complete. Canola and pulses are mostly finished, with a significant program of wheat and barley still to be sown in the ideal window.
- Pasture hay prices have held steady since early February. Bega Valley hay remains the highest priced of the reported hay-growing regions.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$380 to \$500/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$535 to \$675/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$240 to \$290/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

- Favourable conditions are supporting winter crop and pasture progress. May rain across southern and eastern Australia has boosted cropping outcomes and livestock feed conditions.
- Local reports indicate timely March rain and mid-May follow-up have kept sowing moving, with some programs around 70 per cent complete.
- Rain forecast into next week is expected to boost crop prospects further. Urea demand for top-dressing is rising, and rainfall is prompting post-emergent herbicide programs, with some growers seeking cash flow amid rising fertiliser and chemical bills.
- Hay demand in Victoria remains slow, with plenty of stored fodder in sheds heading into winter.
- From June to August, rainfall is likely to be below average.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$255 to \$375/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$440 to \$600/t). Prices remain steady 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

- June to August rainfall is likely to be below average, which can tighten winter feed supply later if follow-up rain does not arrive.
- Favourable conditions have supported winter crop and pasture progress. Rainfall over 16 to 17 May lifted soil moisture, helped by the northwest cloud band.
- The first northwest cloud band of 2026 delivered rainfall to the region. May rainfall across southern and eastern Australia has improved crop and livestock feed conditions, taking the urgency out of hay buying in the short term.
- Rain forecast into next week is expected to consolidate crop prospects in Victoria. Urea demand for top-dressing is lifting, and rainfall is prompting post-emergent herbicide programs, with some growers watching cash flow as input bills fall due.
- Between 50 and 80 per cent of winter seeding is reported as complete.
- Hay demand across Victoria is slow, with plenty of stored fodder in sheds heading into winter.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$285 to \$435). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-05 (\$520 to \$630/t). Prices remain steady 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

- Winter crop and pasture progress is tracking well on the back of favourable conditions. Between 50 and 80 per cent of winter seeding is reported as complete.
- The first northwest cloud band of 2026 delivered rainfall to the region over the weekend. May rainfall across southern and eastern Australia has improved crop prospects and livestock feed conditions, which is keeping immediate hay demand in check.
- Rain forecast in the coming days is expected to consolidate crop prospects across South Australia, Victoria and the southern half of NSW. Urea demand for top-dressing is rising, and rainfall is prompting post-emergent herbicide programs, adding pressure to farm cash flow.
- Further rainfall will help 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.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$245 to \$385/t). Prices remain steady 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 and farmer sentiment high, with more rainfall on the horizon.
- The first northwest cloud band of 2026 delivered rainfall into the region last weekend. May rainfall across southern and eastern Australia has supported crop prospects and livestock feed conditions, with cropping programs up to 80% complete in some areas.
- Hay demand remains slow, with plenty of stored fodder in sheds for winter. Prices in the region have remained steady for the fifth 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.

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

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Central South Australia

- Regional rainfall was well above average from February to April. May rainfall has been solid so far, lifting soil moisture and pasture cover and keeping confidence steady, with further rainfall forecast into next week.
- The first northwest cloud band of 2026 delivered rainfall into the region over the weekend. May rainfall across southern and eastern Australia has supported crop prospects and livestock feed conditions, with some cropping programs up to 80 per cent complete.
- Hay demand remains slow, with plenty of stored fodder in sheds heading into 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

- Early winter crop emergence and establishment is progressing well under mostly favourable conditions, though there is some caution as conditions begin to dry off.
- Despite this, late-week rainfall will provide a helpful top-up for plantings, with 9mm of rain in Katanning and 15mm in Manjimup. More rain is forecast early next week.
- Root-zone soil moisture is at average to above-average levels overall, but it is declining toward the wheatbelt. Parts of the Gascoyne and Pilbara continue to experience a prolonged rainfall deficit, limiting pasture growth heading into the dry season.
- From June to August, rainfall is likely to be below average, particularly toward the wheatbelt.
- Seeding progress is reported as steady, with some growers around halfway through. Canola and lupins are mostly done, with strong emergence reported. Oats and wheat are still to come. The next forecast rainfall is being closely watched for follow-up germination and to support establishment.
- 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. In a positive turn, the June to August outlook now shows above-average rainfall is likely for the region.
- Below-average soil moisture persists across much of Tasmania. In the northwest, soil moisture is closer to average in some areas.
- The first northwest cloud band of 2026 delivered a broad band of rain from the tropics to Tasmania last weekend.
- Showers forecast across the region from Saturday are set to bring daily falls of 1 to 5mm of rain in Smithton, with up to 7mm expected further south in Waratah on Sunday. This will help top up soil moisture and enable planting to progress in programs that have been delayed.
- Sentiment is lifting with sunnier, milder days and frequent late rains. Conditions remain very dry in the east and south Midlands, while the northwest is faring better.
- Enquiries are still coming in, but demand is slow and the market is not showing panic. Silage has been of good quality with plenty moving, so it is staying in rations. Dairy farmers are still 4 to 6 weeks away from the main calf drying-off period, so contractors anticipate demand will be slow until then.
- 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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