

Hay Report

23 January 2026

DELIVERING
for DAIRY

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Summary

Driving Prices Up

- Straw has risen slightly this week, taking on a gentle increase since mid-December. This is significant for many producers, as rising input costs have pushed straw close to being a loss-making product. The recent movement offers some hope of improved margins.
- Baling has now wrapped up across most regions. Producers are shifting to pasture prep, crop seeding, and managing shed space in anticipation of next season's hay.
- Lucerne activity continues in some areas, but yields are down. In SA and Tasmania, many producers are reporting only one cut this season instead of the usual two or three.
- Fires in eastern Victoria have removed large volumes of pasture and infrastructure. Additional supplementary fodder will be needed before autumn pasture growth resumes.
- There are reports that graziers and agents have actively secured agistment in southern Victoria following the Longwood fire. Immediate hay demand is being filled from within 200km of fire zones, avoiding high freight costs for now.

Driving Prices Down

- A late flurry of baling activity has boosted availability across Victoria, helping restrain general demand and keep pricing steady in the short term.
- Freight costs from more distant regions are being avoided for now, easing price pressure as early demand is met locally.

National weather summary and outlook

- December rainfall was below average for much of South Australia, parts of Western Australia and areas in the country's east.
- Rainfall deficiencies for the 12 months from January 2025 persist in small areas of inland and southern Australia, while long-term rainfall deficiencies extend across larger areas.
- Soil moisture deficits have expanded and intensified in parts of the south, particularly the southeast coast, and eased in parts of the inland east.
- Some water storage in the eastern and southern states has declined by up to 50% compared to this time last year.
- Weekly rainfall totals of 25 mm to 300 mm, and locally higher totals, were recorded across large parts of eastern Queensland.
- A monsoon trough and low-pressure areas caused showers, thunderstorms, and locally heavy rainfall through the tropical north.
- Extreme weather conditions, particularly in heat-affected areas, increase the risk of haystack fires due to spontaneous combustion. Regular checks and careful storage are recommended.
- 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

- Rainfall from October to December was mostly above average in the northeastern coastal zone. Ex-tropical cyclone Koji brought very heavy rain to central areas, causing major flooding in some areas. Stock and crop losses have been significant in flood-affected zones.
- Atherton is forecast to remain cloudy with frequent showers. Daily temperatures are expected in the high 20s, with 20 mm of rain forecast for both Sunday and Monday.
- Ongoing wet conditions have kept paddocks inaccessible, placing additional pressure on hay quality, storage, and freight. Crop planting remains behind schedule.
- 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

- The region continues to experience warm temperatures in the mid- to high-30s, with some localities such as Milmerran and Chinchilla expected to reach the low 40s next week.
- Last week's light daily showers and cloud cover have cleared, making way for hotter days.
- The ongoing heat is challenging producers. While some above-average soil moisture remains, field activities may be delayed, and insect pressure is increasing, posing a risk to hay quality.
- Producers are making the most of brief dry windows, which have been limited in recent weeks. Many are waiting for at least three consecutive dry days to carry out haymaking.
- Silage production is continuing in the region.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$300 to \$400/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$475 to \$675/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$150 to \$200/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$250 to \$300/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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North Coast NSW

- Rainfall from October to December was below average across most of the New South Wales coast. Soil moisture levels in the southeastern coastal zone are rated as generally average.

- The BOM outlook for February to April indicates no strong rainfall signal for New South Wales, pointing to roughly equal chances of above- or below-average rainfall (low confidence).
- In Grafton, conditions will remain warm and cloudy, with temperatures expected to reach 38 °C on Monday. In Lismore, occasional daily showers are forecast, helping to freshen up ground crops and support growth without disrupting dry-window activities.
- Growers are continuing to make the most of current weather conditions, finalising baling and moving onto pasture maintenance and pre-planting while the window remains favourable.
- The local hay market remains calm, with most product expected to be used within the region.
- Rhodes grass will soon be cut for feedlot use. Millet cutting continues, and cowpea sowing is underway.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$290 to \$390/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$380 to \$500/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$150 to \$250/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$240 to \$300/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Central West NSW

- Rainfall deficiencies remain; the extended dry spell has left soil moisture mostly below average across the region.
- South, near Cowra, the week will be hot, dry, and sunny, with temperatures expected to reach 44 °C by Monday. In Gilgandra, conditions will be hotter, peaking at 45 °C. These conditions are increasing the risk of fire, further drying out the soil, and causing delays in fieldwork.
- The chance of exceeding average rainfall in Central West NSW over the February to April period is low, according to the BOM's seasonal outlook (low confidence).
- Persistent dry conditions and renewed concerns around feed availability have now triggered hay movement from the region.
- Local vetch and cereal hay continue to move south as Victorian dairy producers secure fodder early in response to water risk.
- Hay reserves are being stockpiled in bulk to safeguard against future shortages, as water allocation prices have climbed to nearly \$450 per megalitre, adding further cost pressure to irrigation-dependent operations.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +10 (\$255 to \$355/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$415 to \$545/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +5 (\$105 to \$165/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$175 to \$2795/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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Bega Valley

- Cooler temperatures and significant daily rainfall last week in Bega have now given way to clear, sunny conditions.
- Hay-related fieldwork and planting preparation are likely to resume as recent days have reached the high 20s, with Sunday peaking in the mid-30s.
- Rainfall last week added moisture back into topsoil layers, temporarily pausing field access and hay production in some areas.
- While the October–December period brought below-average rainfall across the New South Wales coast, current soil conditions in the southeastern coastal zone are generally average, with slightly above-average moisture along the NSW South Coast.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +5 (\$340 to \$460/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$490 to \$630/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +5 (\$215 to \$265/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$280 to \$410/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Goulburn/Murray Valley

- The region remains under long-term rainfall deficiencies. Soil moisture levels are mostly below average, and summer crops are relying heavily on irrigation. The seasonal outlook from February to April suggests a low chance of above-average rainfall.
- Early-summer fires to the east have resulted in widespread pasture loss, damaged infrastructure, and heightened urgency around fodder access. Demand for hay and silage remains steady, though hard to quantify, as emergency needs are being met rapidly.
- Many affected graziers have moved livestock to agistment in southern Victoria. As a result, fodder is still being sourced from areas within 200 km of fire-affected regions, helping avoid the \$100-per-tonne freight cost currently reported from northern and western parts of the state.
- Grain harvest continues in parts of the region and is expected to track above the state average.
- Weather across the region is expected to reach extreme highs early next week. Bendigo is forecast to hit 45°C and Shepparton 44°C by Tuesday. These temperatures may stall fieldwork, trigger schedule changes, and elevate fire risk.
- Pasture hay prices in the region have finally levelled after a steady slide since mid-November.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$245 to \$365/t). Prices remain steady this week.

- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$390 to \$550/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +5 (\$90 to \$110/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$190 to \$350/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Gippsland

- The region has received average to above-average rainfall, easing prior drought conditions. Soil moisture levels are currently average to slightly above average in West Gippsland. The February to April outlook suggests a low chance of exceeding median rainfall.
- Favourable late-spring conditions saw strong pasture growth, resulting in exceptional hay and silage production. Many round bales remain stored unstacked along fence lines across central and eastern Gippsland.
- High local production has contributed to soft demand across Victoria, and pasture hay prices have stabilised this week after several weeks of decline.
- Sunny, warm conditions continue across the region, from Warragul (low to high 30s) to Yarram and Orbost (mid-20s to low 30s). These temperatures support ongoing fieldwork and winter planting preparations.
- Additional fodder consumption is expected as fire-affected stock are agisted in the south. Inter-regional hay movement into fire-affected parts of Gippsland continues, but local volumes are not currently under pressure.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$275 to \$425). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$470 to \$580/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +5 (\$115 to \$175/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$200 to \$370/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Southwest Victoria

- The region has continued to experience below-average rainfall over the past 24 months, particularly in the Western District, where soil moisture remains low. The chance of exceeding average rainfall from February to April is low.
- Despite this, late-spring warmth and timely rain in October and November supported strong pasture growth. As a result, pasture hay and silage production has been very high, with large volumes of round bales visible in paddocks and along fencelines across the region.
- Local demand is soft. Both pasture and cereal hay are proving difficult to sell, as markets in western Victoria are fully supplied. Much of the remaining unbaled standing feed has dried out and lost nutritional value following several hot days above 30°C.

- Cereal straw baling has just wrapped up, and growers are turning to pasture preparation for winter crop planting. Temperatures will climb to 41°C in Hamilton from the weekend, elevating fire risk and pausing some fieldwork.
- Fodder is being sent into eastern Victoria from within 200 km of impacted areas to minimise freight costs. Agistment of fire-affected stock in the south will likely lift consumption in the coming weeks.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$265 to \$405/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$400 to \$560). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +5 (\$100 to \$150/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: -+/-0 (\$190 to \$310/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Southeast South Australia

- Rainfall remains below average across the region, with low soil moisture and increased irrigation for summer crops. The February to April outlook shows a low chance of above-average rainfall. October falls supported an average grain yield despite a difficult season.
- Northern areas like Tintinara will see continued heat up to 43°C, which may pause field activity and heighten fire risk. In the south, conditions in Mt Gambier are expected to range from 28°C to 40°C until Wednesday, allowing continued daily fieldwork, though fire remains a concern.
- Hay baling is complete and will not resume until spring.
- Demand for fodder continues to be influenced by early summer fires and reduced pasture feed in Victoria, alongside poor spring growth and low local fodder production.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$290 to \$390/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$430 to \$570/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$135 to \$185/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$260 to \$340/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Central South Australia

- Rainfall deficiencies persist across the region, with below-average soil moisture and increased irrigation requirements for summer crops. The chance of exceeding average rainfall from February to April is low. Despite seasonal challenges, timely October rainfall supported an average grain yield.

- Hay baling is now complete across most of the region and will not resume until spring. Ongoing heat is affecting conditions, with temperatures in Jamestown and Eudunda expected to reach the low 40s in the coming days before cooling on Wednesday. Prolonged heat may delay fieldwork and increase fire risk.
- The fodder market is under pressure due to early-season heatwaves, limited spring feed availability, and limited local hay production. Additional fodder is needed for livestock until new-season pasture becomes available in autumn, although exact demand volumes are unclear.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$205 to \$375/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$370 to \$460/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$110 to \$190/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Southwest Western Australia

- Rainfall from October to December was below average in southern areas and above average in the north, improving soil moisture in parts of the region. Most cropping paddocks are now fallow, with growers employing moisture-conservation strategies. The chance of exceeding average rainfall from February to April is low.
- Temperatures are easing across the region. Inland areas such as Katanning are moving from the high 30s down to the high 20s and low 30s, with occasional cloud cover and fire danger warnings issued by BOM. Coastal areas like Bunbury remain in the mid-20s with clear, workable conditions.
- Production has been high, although some producers report sitting on little stock because it has been pre-sold in bulk. Field conditions remain suitable for ongoing operations such as fertiliser application and laser levelling. Buyer activity remains subdued at this stage.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$185 to \$325/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$590 to \$790/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +10 (\$110 to \$170/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$220 to \$270/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Northwest Tasmania

- Conditions remain favourable for hay production, with average to above-average rainfall recorded and adequate soil moisture across the region. Daytime temperatures in Smithton are in the low to mid-20s, while Waratah is cooler and overcast, both ideal for fieldwork.

- Hay and straw growth is strong across the board, with ongoing baling and raking activity. This follows significant delays earlier in the season due to prolonged cold, wind, and rainfall.
- Straw and pasture hay yields are reported as exceptional, with some growers baling up to 300 per cent more than at the same time last year. Lucerne is trading steadily, although many growers have only managed a single cut following a delayed start of up to three months.
- Large volumes of grass straw are expected to enter the supply chain imminently. Pasture hay stocks are high, and buying activity has commenced with some fervour.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$250 to \$350/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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