Dairy Australia

Hay Report

6 March 2026

DELIVERING for DAIRY

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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

Summary

Driving Prices Up

- Lucerne prices have lifted across key Victorian regions, as new-season irrigated cuts are highly sought after following poor and failed spring production in dry areas.
- Straw prices have firmed in Victorian dryland regions, reflecting tighter carryover stocks and improved cereal crop confidence following the autumn break.
- Strong rainfall across Victoria, South Australia and southern New South Wales has boosted confidence for new season hay production, firming grower sentiment.
- Full soil moisture profiles in parts of the Wimmera and Mallee are improving supply outlook but strengthening grower pricing confidence.
- The conflict in the Middle East is raising concerns around fuel and fertiliser costs, and is likely to put upward pressure on hay prices.
- Limited local trade due to widespread wet conditions restricts short-term supply to the market.

Driving Prices Down

- Pasture hay prices have eased in southwest Victoria following widespread rainfall and improved feed availability, reducing urgent demand for hay.
- Improved soil moisture levels across southern cropping zones are lowering immediate restocking demand.
- A forecast of minimal rainfall over the coming days may stabilise buyer confidence and temper panic buying.
- Overall trade remains limited, keeping the market steady with minimal aggressive price movement.

National weather summary and outlook

- Weekly rainfall of 50mm to 200mm, with locally higher totals, fell across northern Australia, southwest Queensland, western New South Wales and most of South Australia, supporting pasture growth and improving soil moisture for hay regions.
- February rainfall was 66 per cent above average nationally, the fifth wettest on record, with root-zone soil moisture now above to very much above average across most inland areas.
- Soil moisture remains below average in northeast New South Wales, southeast Queensland, Tasmania and parts of Western Australia, maintaining fodder risk in these regions.
- Flood warnings remain current across large parts of Queensland and other states, with potential short-term disruptions to sowing windows and transport.
- For autumn, rainfall is likely to be below average across most of southern Australia, with a strengthening dry signal from April and an increased likelihood of warmer-than-average temperatures nationally, raising the risk of a dry start to the cool season.

*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 in the north, with flooding across several events. Southern areas tracked below average. This has created a mixed production outlook across the zone.
- Soil moisture is above average to very much above average in most areas, with flood watches in place and river levels rising. Access to paddocks remains limited, slowing planting and cutting activity.
- A tropical low off the coast is forecast to bring further rainfall, with a moderate chance of cyclone development. This increases the risk of crop damage, lodging, and fungal disease, adding costs through higher nutrient and management inputs.
- Rhodes grass planting is now another week behind due to persistent wet conditions. Growers require a dry window soon to stay on schedule, which may tighten future supply if delays continue.
- In the short term, strong soil moisture supports production potential, but ongoing rainfall and flood risk are restricting field work and delaying new-season supply to market.
- 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

- December to February rainfall was below average, and soil moisture was also below average across the zone. This has limited hay yields and kept supply tight.
- Forecast rainfall over the coming days, including in the Toowoomba district, will help replenish root zone moisture and support winter crop preparation. This may improve hay production prospects if follow-up rainfall occurs.
- The March to May outlook shows a near-equal chance of above- or below-average rainfall, with a higher chance of below-average rainfall in April. This uncertainty is slowing forward selling, with growers reluctant to commit tonnage until seasonal conditions become clearer.
- Peak pasture growth is supporting current grazing demand, although rising insect pressure may increase input costs and affect crop quality.
- Growers remain alert to tropical low activity off the coast. If inland rainfall lifts soil saturation or flooding risk, it could disrupt cutting schedules and transport, affecting short-term hay supply and logistics.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($300 to $400/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($450 to $550/t). Prices remain steady this week.:

- Straw: +/-0 ($150 to $200/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($200 to $300/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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North Coast NSW

- Rainfall from December to February was mostly below average. Northern coastal areas are holding below-average soil moisture, while other parts of the zone are average to above average. This has limited hay production in drier areas and kept supply measured.
- Above-average rainfall is forecast for March, which will lift soil moisture, support pasture growth and improve on-farm water storage. Stronger pasture growth may ease short-term demand for purchased hay.
- Lismore is forecast to receive 30mm of rain on Friday, 10mm on Saturday, 30mm on Sunday and 20mm on Monday, with temperatures around 28 °C. These rainfalls will delay pasture preparation, increase the risk of quality downgrades for hay on the ground, and slow transport in some areas. This may briefly tighten supply of higher-quality lines.
- The dry signal strengthens in April. Below-average rainfall combined with warmer conditions may slow pasture growth later in autumn, potentially lifting hay demand again if feed reserves tighten.
- Hay prices remain stable for the fourth reporting week. Trading is occurring within the minimum and maximum pricing parameters, reflecting balanced supply and steady demand across the region.
- 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

- Parts of the region received their first meaningful rainfall since Spring, with reports of 25-60mm of rain across affected districts. These rainfalls were widely welcomed after several months of dry conditions. Surface soil moisture has improved, and there has been an early pasture response where rainfall totals were higher.
- Despite this event, no further rainfall is forecast in the coming week. Without follow-up rainfall, the benefit of 25-60mm of rain will be short-term. Subsoil moisture remains low across much of the region, and pasture growth will slow quickly if conditions return to dry, warm conditions.
- The March to May outlook continues to show a low to very low chance of exceeding average rainfall, with above-average temperatures forecast. This creates uncertainty around autumn

sowing and may limit the establishment of new-season hay and cereal crops, keeping forward hay supply at risk.

- Contractor feedback indicates that prior to this rainfall event, livestock water shortages were driving herd reductions, agistment and water transport. The recent rainfall may slow further destocking in the short term. If follow-up rainfall does not eventuate, hay demand is expected to strengthen again as graziers protect remaining ground cover and fill feed gaps.
- Growers report strong straw yields, with baling complete and good availability moving into feedlot markets as a lower-cost ration component. This is supporting ration demand where pasture recovery is not sustained.
- Hay prices show no change for the third consecutive week. While rainfall has eased immediate pressure, the absence of follow-up rainfall could quickly tighten supply and support prices if demand lifts again.
- No change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($280 to $380/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($415 to $545/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 ($110 to $175/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($180 to $280/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Bega Valley

- Rainfall from December to February was mostly below average. This has tightened pasture growth throughout the summer and kept demand steady.
- Soil moisture is currently average to above average. This has supported pasture recovery in late summer and eased immediate feed pressure for many producers.
- The forecast for above-average rainfall in March will help maintain soil moisture, support pasture growth, and improve on-farm water storage. However, the dry signal strengthens into April, with a below-average rainfall outlook and above-average temperatures expected. If April rainfall does not materialise, pasture growth rates may slow, and irrigation demand may increase, placing upward pressure on hay demand into late autumn.
- Maximum and minimum temperatures are also forecast to be above average for the March to May period. Warmer conditions will increase evapotranspiration rates, potentially leading to a rapid decline in soil moisture reserves without consistent rainfall. This remains a key watch point for livestock producers and hay buyers.
- The next several days are forecast to bring light showers of 3-7mm rain daily in Bega. These rainfalls will help maintain surface moisture and freshen pasture in the short term. However, they are unlikely to significantly recharge subsoil moisture or materially shift hay supply settings unless followed by more substantial rainfall.
- Hay prices remain steady for the fourth consecutive week and continue to sit at the highest levels nationally.
- No change to pricing this week.

- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($345 to $465/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 ($490 to $630/t). Prices remain steady 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

- Rainfall from December to February was above average across much of the region. Recent widespread rainfall has lifted soil moisture to above-average to well above-average levels. This improves conditions for winter crop and hay sowing.
- In Carisbrook, 91mm of rain since Friday has reduced irrigation demand and strengthened confidence ahead of April sowing. Northern irrigation areas such as Swan Hill recorded around 130 per cent of normal summer rainfall. Water security is currently supportive for irrigated fodder production.
- The March outlook shows near-equal rainfall chances, with the dry signal strengthening into April. Follow-up rainfall will be important for maintaining pasture growth and supporting new-season hay establishment.
- Some growers have shifted planned canola area into hay. If autumn conditions remain favourable, this may support early-season hay supply.
- Several mixed farming operations report strong straw and header-tailings volumes retained on-farm. In some cases, they have been able to produce several thousand large square bales from a single barley block and store them undercover for later use. This reflects a level of self-sufficiency among some growers, which may reduce reliance on buying hay if conditions tighten.
- After a month of flat pricing, lucerne has lifted, supported by fresh irrigated cuts entering the market. Straw prices have also firmed, easing pressure on grower margins.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($245 to $365/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +10 ($400 to $560/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +5 ($95 to $115/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($190 to $350/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Gippsland

- Rainfall from December to February was mostly average, except along the south-eastern coast. Inland areas remain below average in soil moisture, while other districts are at average to above-average levels. The March to May outlook leans below average for rainfall, with a stronger dry signal into April.

- Sale recorded just over 100 per cent of normal summer rainfall. Late falls of up to 50mm in eastern areas have lifted short-term surface moisture and supported pasture recovery.
- A late break of about 75mm of rain in the south has driven a sharp lift in pasture growth. Dairy farmers have eased back from full hand feeding as dams refill and paddocks respond. This has reduced short-term hay demand.
- Despite the improvement in pasture growth, reliance on purchased hay has eased following the extended dry period. If April rainfall is below average, hay demand could tighten again quickly, particularly from dairy operations.
- A strong Mountain Calf sale at Bairnsdale points to producer confidence. Higher stock numbers moving through the system may support steady fodder demand if seasonal conditions turn dry again.
- After a month of flat pricing, lucerne has lifted on the back of fresh irrigated cuts entering the market. Straw prices have also firmed, offering growers some margin relief.
- Some change to pricing this week.
- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($275 to $425). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +10 ($480 to $590/t). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +5 ($120 to $180/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($180 to $350/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Southwest Victoria

- December to February rainfall was mostly average across the region. However, parts of the southwest tracked well below average, with some districts receiving around one-third of their long-term average and only modest late rainfall of about 20mm in some areas.
- Soil moisture is average to above average in some areas, while inland districts remain below average. Agriculture Victoria soil probe data supports this, with the Hamilton probe reading 6.9 per cent moisture in the top 100cm. This indicates limited full profile recharge and ongoing tight subsoil conditions.
- The March to May outlook leans below average for rainfall, with a stronger dry signal into April. While forecasts suggest potential rainfall in March, producers remain cautious given soil moisture deficits and warmer conditions across parts of the region.
- Widespread rainfall has triggered a rapid shift from hand-feeding to grazing. Strong pasture growth and heavy oat crops being cut for silage have reduced short-term hay demand. Some buyers have stepped back to assess feed on hand.
- Early-season winter cereal and oaten hay plantings will rely heavily on autumn rainfall. Without follow-up rainfall, crop potential and hay yields may tighten.
- After four weeks of flat pricing, lucerne and straw have lifted. Straw increases offer some margin relief following earlier pressure from rising input costs. Pasture hay eased by $10 per tonne, reflecting softer short-term demand following recent rainfall.
- Some change to pricing this week.

- Cereal hay: +/-0 ($265 to $405/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +10 ($410 to $570). Prices increase this week.
- Straw: +5 ($105 to $155/t). Prices increase this week.
- Pasture hay: -10 ($180 to $300/t). Prices decrease this week.

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Southeast South Australia

- Rainfall from December to February was above average across much of the region due to a slow-moving trough associated with a tropical low. Prior to this event, rainfall and soil moisture were below, or very much below, average.
- Following widespread recent rainfall across South Australia and Victoria, soil moisture is now mostly above average, with some areas well above average. This has significantly shifted seasonal conditions in a short period.
- Despite the turnaround, the March to May outlook suggests a low chance of exceeding average rainfall overall. March shows near equal chances, with the dry signal strengthening into April. Ongoing rainfall will be important to maintain momentum into sowing and early growth.
- Many districts received strong weekly totals, with Loxton recording 70mm. Bureau modelling shows soil moisture shifting rapidly from very low percentiles to very high deciles within a month. This sharp recovery has lifted grower confidence heading into the new season.
- Livestock producers are seeing improved pasture growth and water storage. This will ease short-term hay demand as hand-feeding declines. However, sustained demand will depend on follow-up rainfall and pasture persistence into winter.
- Warm and dry conditions forecast around Naracoorte will allow producers to assess paddocks and prepare for winter sowing. Hay area decisions are likely to remain cautious until autumn rainfall patterns are clearer.
- Reports of footrot at saleyards may reduce livestock movement. If producers hold back stock, on-farm feeding demand may increase in the short term, boosting local hay demand.
- Hay prices remain steady for the fourth consecutive week, reflecting a balanced position between eased immediate demand and cautious forward sentiment.
- No 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: +/-0 ($130 to $180/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 ($255 to $335/t). Prices remain steady this week.

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Central South Australia

- December to February rainfall was above average across much of the zone due to a slow-moving trough linked to a tropical low. Prior to this, rainfall and soil moisture were below or well below average. Recent widespread rainfall has lifted soil moisture to above-average to well above-average across many central districts.
- The March to May outlook shows a low chance of exceeding average rainfall overall. March has near-equal chances of above- or below-average rainfall, with the dry signal strengthening into April. This keeps risk in the system as sowing begins.
- Most parts recorded significant rainfall over the past two weeks, delivered through two steady soaking rain events. Dams have improved, paddocks have cleaned up, and soil moisture has been replenished ahead of seeding. This will drive a pasture response and reduce immediate reliance on purchased hay.
- Warm conditions forecast for the week ahead, including temperatures near 28C in Jamestown, will support paddock access and preparation. Further north near Peterborough, flood impacts are easing, although some areas continue to recover.
- Dry summer conditions before these rains limited subsoil moisture reserves. Even with recent rainfall, full profile recharge is not guaranteed. Hay programs will depend heavily on follow-up autumn rainfall to support strong winter crop establishment.
- Growers remain cautious despite improved confidence. Rising fuel and fertiliser costs will influence planting intentions, including the balance between grain and hay area. Conservative planting decisions could tighten hay supply if seasonal conditions turn dry later.
- 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 was mostly below to well below average. Some areas along the path of ex-tropical cyclone Mitchell received above-average rainfall, but it was patchy.
- Soil moisture is below average across the southwest and average to above average in other parts of the zone. Most cropping country is fallowed. Growers are conserving moisture ahead of autumn sowing.
- The March to May outlook shows an increased likelihood of very much below-average rainfall.
- Maximum and minimum temperatures are forecast to be unusually warm.
- With average to below-average soil moisture and a dry outlook, growers are likely to rely heavily on autumn rainfall to commence sowing. Crop choice and variety selection will lean toward types that handle dry starts. This keeps the risk of early hay production elevated.
- Inland at Katanning, hot and sunny conditions are forecast with no rainfall in the coming week. Bunbury and coastal districts show similar conditions. This allows field preparation but does not

rebuild topsoil moisture. Without follow-up rainfall, early-sown hay crops may struggle to establish.

- Western Australian trials funded through the AgriFutures export fodder program show oats sown at 100mm outperformed awnless wheat and barley at two of three sites, due to their longer coleoptile accessing deeper moisture. However, if moisture is already present in the top 50mm, deep sowing can delay emergence and reduce performance. Timing and soil moisture will be critical for hay yield outcomes.
- 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

- December to February rainfall was mostly below average, leaving most of Tasmania with below-average soil moisture. The March to May outlook suggests rainfall is likely to remain below average overall. While March rainfall may assist pasture growth and on-farm water storage, the drier April signal keeps pressure on winter sowing plans, given current soil moisture deficits.
- Around Smithton, temperatures in the low 20s and recent sunshine are allowing producers to complete fieldwork after weeks of windy, wet conditions. However, persistent strong winds have dried the topsoil, tightening winter sowing windows without follow-up rainfall to rebuild moisture reserves.
- Hay contractors report steady enquiries from local farm operations and buyers looking to secure supply. Contractors are actively seeking hay from growers; however, quality is mixed to poor following earlier cool conditions and rainfall that affected bales left in paddocks. This is limiting the availability of higher-grade hay and keeping prices firm.
- 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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