



Province's Hay Situation Calls for Wise planning

Dryness across province signals necessary preparations for fall and winter feeding periods

Winnipeg, Mb (**August 8, 2018**) – While weekend rains might help things in some regions, Manitoba hay producers have been increasingly reporting decreased hay yields and slow regrowth due to previous dry conditions. [Manitoba Forage and Grassland Association](#) (MFGA) is reminding all producers that now is the time to plan ahead for the fall and winter feeding periods.

“It looks like our weather extremes have taken a turn to the drier side of things over the past year in Manitoba as well as Saskatchewan and North Dakota,” says Darren Chapman, MFGA Chair and Virden-area producer. “We all need to prepare a plan for the rest of this season and forthcoming winter feeding requirements. This will require some tough decisions, but necessary ones.”

John McGregor, MFGA’s hay expert and [Green Gold Program](#) lead, has been keeping tabs on the provincial scene. He agrees with Chapman.

“Fall pasture growth often provides additional opportunity for grazing livestock. However, careful management of pastures is essential for the over-wintering of forages and improvement into the next growing season,” says McGregor. “The dry summer this year has stunted fall pasture regrowth dramatically and for many producers, feed supplementation will be necessary. “

Rains fell in various areas over the course of July and early August which may have aided some pastures and hay fields in some regions. That will be relief for some, says McGregor, but the overall provincial picture leans toward a reduced hay yield heading into fall and winter.

“Most alfalfa growers have completed their second cut of alfalfa and many producers have the first cut of hay just finished or are close to finished,” says McGregor. “The continued dry conditions have had a drastic effect on both yield and regrowth. Producers across the province are reporting yields in the 40-60 per cent of normal range with very limited re-growth. Without additional moisture many areas won’t have the opportunity to take a second cut of hay which will affect hay supplies for the coming fall and winter feeding period.”

At [Manitoba Beef and Forage Initiatives](#) (MBFI) near Brandon, the second cut of hay started this week. Shawn Cabak, MBFI interim general manager and Manitoba Agriculture forage and livestock specialist, said the yield from the first cut of 2018 was only around 40 per cent of what was baled in the first cut of 2017. He feels the same reduced outcomes as the first cut will happen with the second cut that is now under way.

“Straw and grain will need to be sourced to help with feed supplies,” says Cabak. “The cattle will also come off of pasture earlier than normal at our MBFI Brookdale site. Grazing the riparian areas will help along with the polycrops and rye, vetch, triticale.”

Dave Koslowsky is past chair of MFGA and runs a mixed farming operation near Killarney. Koslowsky says putting up and testing green feed is one sure-fire way to bridge the impacts of the dry growing season.

“With all the green feed being put up, there is a need to promote feed testing,” says Koslowsky, who suggested interested producers contact Manitoba Agriculture for more details.

When it comes to the impacts of supply and demand, one good source of pressure relief and information for Manitoba producers is [Manitoba Agriculture’s Hay Listing Service](#) (sidebar below) that helps connect those looking for hay, pasture or alternative feed with those that have supplies available. MFGA has canvassed the expertise in the organization to come up with some steps and recommendations for producers to bridge the situation as forecasts continue to predict a hotter and drier fall season. The key, says Chapman, is acting now. And, Chapman stresses, don’t be worried about reaching out to peers and organizations like MFGA for advice and expertise.

“It’s much easier to start on planning and actions now than when pastures have run out,” says Chapman. “Don’t feel alone, we are producers too and we are here to help and discuss options. Everyone’s situations are a little different. It’s important we keep in touch and prepare together so we may carry on our chosen lifestyle we cherish with as little hardship to our herds, fields, business and most of all, family as possible.”

MFGA’s Top Ten Recommendations: Prepping for Fall and Winter in dry times

1. Start to consider annual crop fields to cut as green feed and to bale straw off
2. Line-up corn fields to take as silage, or having producers drop the stalks so they can be baled
3. Electric fencing on corn fields for grazing the stover
4. Weaning early to reduce feed requirements
5. Reduce need for feed via herd management such as preg-checking cows to determine energy needs
6. Buying feed in advance
7. Feed to real weights. It's important to only feed enough hay to support the true weight of the cows in the herd.
8. Feed the right amount of hay and meet the nutritional needs at different stages of life.
9. Use Supplement and look for alternative feed sources
10. Feed test your feed and balance your rations

Sidebar: [Manitoba Agriculture’s Hay Listing Service](#) Offers Help

Manitoba Agriculture designed their hay listing service for exactly this reason: Connecting producers with to producers without.

“With our current situation that may position some of our beef producers being short of feed in the coming months, there are also producers who are in the position of excess feed and pasture availability,” said Miles Beaudin, Director, Primary Agriculture for Manitoba Agriculture. “Our department has an excellent but underutilized program called the Manitoba Hay Listing Service that allows the listing of available or wanted hay, pasture or alternative feed.”

Producers wanting to make use of this service should call Manitoba Agriculture toll-free at 1-84-GROW-MB-AG (1-844-769-6224) and the department will call them back within 30 minutes to capture information.

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