

July 25, 2006

Crop conditions as of July 20, 2006

Crop growing conditions in Alberta have changed dramatically during the last two weeks. High temperatures, in conjunction with lack of precipitation, have reduced soil moisture reserves and caused crops to abort flowering and podding. As a result, crop conditions and yield potentials have deteriorated significantly, compared to a few weeks ago. The exception is the Southern Region where over 80 per cent of crops remain in good condition, due to better moisture reserves. Provincially, conditions of spring wheat are reported as seven per cent poor, 29 per cent fair, 51 per cent good, and 13 per cent excellent, with a similar rating for barley. Canola is rated as ten per cent poor, 32 per cent fair, 46 per cent good, and 12 per cent excellent, while dry peas are seven per cent poor, 26 per cent fair, 53 per cent good, and 14 per cent excellent. Winter cereals have also suffered from the heat stress, but to a lesser extent, with 85 per cent being rated as good or excellent.

Crop development this year is about two weeks ahead of normal, because of the hot, dry weather. Spring cereals are generally in the flowering stage, while the majority of canola and dry peas are in the podding stage. It is expected that combining of winter cereals will begin in about a week. Additionally, silaging and greenfeed baling, mostly of spring cereals, is well underway.

In most areas of the province, scattered thundershowers have brought only limited amounts of precipitation during the last two weeks, resulting in a substantial reduction in soil moisture reserves. Provincially, surface moisture is rated as 36 per cent poor, 31 per cent fair, 28 per cent good, and five per cent excellent, while sub-surface moisture is 24 per cent poor, 35 per cent fair, 33 per cent good, and eight per cent excellent. Rain is needed across the province.

Producers have taken advantage of the recent hot, dry weather and made good progress in haying operations. Provincially, first cut is 80 per cent complete on dryland, and over 95 per cent complete under irrigation. Overall, hay yields are estimated to be above average, with quality rated mostly as good or excellent. The second cut has just begun for irrigated hay in the Southern Region. Pasture conditions in Alberta are reported as 23 per cent poor, 36 per cent fair, 32 per cent good, and nine per cent excellent.

Crop damage from hailstorms has occurred in some areas. Also reported are diseases in cereals, and some pest problems with gophers, bertha armyworm moth, lygus bugs, grasshoppers, flea beetles, army cutworms, root maggots, wireworms, and other insects.

REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS:

The 2006 Alberta Crop Report Series continues to provide summaries for the following five regions:

Region One: Southern (Strathmore, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Foremost)

- Crops are advancing rapidly and remain in good condition, although crops in many areas are showing signs of stress from heat and lack of moisture. Over 80 per cent of spring cereals, 85 per cent of canola and 90 per cent of dry peas are rated as good or excellent. Spring cereals are generally in the flowering stage, while canola and dry peas are mostly podding. Swathing of winter cereals has begun in some areas. Sugar beets, dry beans and potatoes are developing quite well and show promising yield potentials.
- The first cut haying operation is being wrapped up in most areas, with above average yields and quality for both irrigated and dryland hay. The second cut has just begun for irrigated hay.
- Soil moisture conditions vary considerably across the region, ranging from poor to excellent.

Region Two: Central (Rimbey, Airdrie, Coronation, Oyen)

- The recent hot, dry weather has significantly reduced soil moisture reserves, especially at the surface level. Overall, surface moisture is rated as 44 per cent poor, 19 per cent fair, 30 per cent good, and seven per cent excellent, while sub-surface moisture is 17 per cent poor, 26 per cent fair, 39 per cent good, and 18 per cent excellent.
- Crop conditions have been deteriorating. Rating of spring cereals in the region is eight per cent poor, 23 per cent fair, 52 per cent good, and 17 per cent excellent, while canola is eight per cent poor, 24 per cent fair, 54 per cent good, and 14 per cent excellent. There are also several reports of crop damage from hailstorms.
- The first cut haying operation is estimated at about 70 per cent complete. Additionally, some spring cereals are being taken off for silage or greenfeed production, with good to excellent yields.
- Conditions of pasture and standing hay range from poor to excellent.

Region Three: North East (Smoky Lake, Vermilion, Camrose, Provost)

- With high temperatures and limited amounts of precipitation received during the last two weeks, soil moisture conditions have been deteriorating. Overall, surface moisture is rated as 51 per cent poor, 40 per cent fair, and nine per cent good, while sub-surface moisture is 28 per cent poor, 41 per cent fair, and 31 per cent good.
- The recent hot, dry weather has caused crops to abort flowering, reducing crop yield potentials. Spring wheat conditions in the region are rated as nine per cent poor, 36 per cent fair, 50 per cent good, and 5 per cent excellent, while canola is 14 per cent poor, 38 per cent fair, 44 per cent good, and four per cent excellent.
- The first cut haying operation is 87 per cent complete. Pasture conditions are rated mostly as poor or fair.

Region Four: North West (Barrhead, Edmonton, Leduc, Drayton Valley, Athabasca)

- Spotty rain showers have brought little moisture in most areas of the region during the last two weeks. Surface moisture in the region is rated as 32 per cent poor, 39 per cent fair, 28 per cent good, and one per cent excellent, while sub-surface moisture is 32 per cent poor, 39 per cent fair, and 29 per cent good.
- Crop conditions in the region have been deteriorating, due to the recent hot, dry weather. Overall, spring wheat is rated as seven per cent poor, 26 per cent fair, 55 per cent good, and 12 per cent excellent, while canola is ten per cent poor, 33 per cent fair, 49 per cent good, and 8 per cent excellent.
- The first cut haying operation is 85 per cent complete. Pasture conditions range from poor to good.

Region Five: Peace River (Fairview, Falher, Grande Prairie, Valleyview)

- Precipitation received during the last two weeks varied considerably across the region, with higher amounts reported in the northern areas. However, high temperatures have depleted soil moisture reserves. Overall, surface moisture is rated as 27 per cent poor, 39 per cent fair, 31 per cent good, and three per cent excellent, while sub-surface moisture is 37 per cent poor, 33 per cent fair, 29 per cent good, and one per cent excellent.
- Spring wheat in the region is rated as 11 per cent poor, 42 per cent fair, 43 per cent good, and four per cent excellent, while canola is 13 per cent poor, 49 per cent fair, 34 per cent good, and four per cent excellent.
- The first cut haying operation is 75 per cent complete. Pasture conditions range from poor to good.

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