CROP AND PASTURE REPORT

JANUARY  2009

COMPiled 3rd FEBRUARY 2009 BY PETERFULWOOD

RURAL SOLUTIONS SA DISTRICT REPORTERS

CROP REPORTING DISTRICTS

SUMMARY OF CROP AND PASTURE CONDITIONS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Weather

Crops

Pastures

DISTRICT REPORTS

Western Eyre Peninsula

Eastern Eyre Peninsula

Lower Eyre Peninsula

Yorke Peninsula

Lower North

Mid North

Upper North

Central Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island

Northern Murray Mallee

Southern Murray Mallee

Lower Murray

Upper South East

Lower South East

CROP PRODUCTION ESTIMATES

Report Compilation

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Prepared by Rural Solutions SA
## Rural Solutions SA District Reporters

### Eyre Peninsula

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Fax</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr Neil Cordon</td>
<td>PORT LINCOLN SA 5606</td>
<td>08 8680 6210</td>
<td>08 8680 5020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Kieran Wauchope</td>
<td>PORT LINCOLN SA 5606</td>
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### Northern Agricultural Districts & Yorke Peninsula

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<tr>
<td>Mr Michael Wurst</td>
<td>17 Irvine Street</td>
<td>08 8664 1408</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Charlton Jeisman</td>
<td>JAMESTOWN SA 5491</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Barry Mudge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr David Creeper</td>
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<td>Mr Mehdi Zaboli</td>
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Crop Reporting Districts

KEY LINKS


Drought Hotline

For drought related information on support services, local rural financial counsellors, information on Centrelink payments and services, maintaining land condition, managing stock and crops in dry times, and the condition of the River Murray and Murray-Darling Basin.
Summary of Crop and Pasture Conditions in South Australia  
January 2009

Prepared by Peter Fulwood

WEATHER
South Australian rainfall data for the last month is available from the Bureau of Meteorology website: http://www.bom.gov.au/weather/sa/observations.shtml

- Warm to hot with heat wave conditions late in the month; several centres had their highest January temperature on record.
- Mean daily maximum temperatures varied from 1-4ºC above average.
- Occasional strong winds raised dust from exposed paddocks.

RAINFALL
- Very little rainfall apart from a few isolated thunderstorms, with many centres recording no rainfall for the month and totals in most districts less than 2 mm.

PREVIOUS SEASONS
- Last season (2007) was variable, from severe drought affected areas in the north to near average crop production further south, on the back of the severe statewide drought of 2006.

SEASON TO DATE
- Seeding was largely completed during May and early June in variable moisture conditions. Rapid growth occurred during June, although patchy establishment and frequent strong winds delayed emergence in some areas. Good rains during July and August enabled crops to maintain growth, although colder, frosty conditions slowed development. Dry conditions in both September and October caused crop yield potential to drop significantly. Harvest was largely completed by the end of December despite delays from widespread rainfall. Grain yields and quality were highly variable. Overall crop yield for the state was estimated to be around 25% below the ten year average.

CROPS
- Harvest is finished in all districts apart from a few bean crops in the Lower South East.
- Spraying for summer weed control continued from last month, but was limited by the hot, dry conditions, especially later in January.
- Summer weed populations have declined as result of spraying, grazing and hot weather, reducing the risk of a green bridge carrying over disease.
- Cultivation continues to be used for weed control in some areas, exposing soil to wind and water erosion.
- Significant falls in the price of fertilisers and some herbicides have been very welcome and helped boost morale, although some growers who bought fertiliser last year have missed out on the price drop.
- Total crop area estimated at 4 million hectares, with crop production estimated at 4.74 million tonnes.

PASTURES
- Paddock feed is currently adequate, although much of the green pick from the December rainfall has dried off.
- Perennial pastures continue to provide feed in some areas, although growth has slowed with the current very dry conditions.
- Surface cover levels remain satisfactory, however with ongoing dry conditions paddocks will need to be monitored to avoid overgrazing.
- Limited supplementary feeding is likely to commence in the next few weeks in some districts.

Acknowledgment
Weather information: - Climate and Consultative Services Section of the Bureau of Meteorology: Internet: http://www.bom.gov.au
DISTRICT REPORTS

Western Eyre Peninsula

By Neil Cordon

WEATHER
- Hot, dry with occasional strong wind dominated the weather throughout the district.

RAINFALL
- No rain was recorded for the month with long term averages ranging between 10-15 mm.

CROPS
- Farmers are busy conducting reviews with financial institutions.
- Summer weed spraying has been a tedious task not helped by less than ideal weather for chemical application.
- The self-sown cereal green bridge has been dramatically reduced through grazing and the hot weather.

PASTURES
- Stock feed is in good supply and quality following the December rains, however sandy rises are still prone to wind erosion.
- Lincoln weed growth on paddocks or areas of paddocks that were drifting in 2008 has assisted in stabilising the soil.

Eastern Eyre Peninsula

By Neil Cordon

WEATHER
- Hot, especially in the second half of the month, and dry with occasional strong wind dominated the weather throughout the district.

RAINFALL
- No rain was recorded for the month with long term averages ranging between 10-15 mm.

CROPS
- Farmers are busy conducting reviews with financial institutions.
- Summer weed spraying has been a tedious task not helped by less than ideal weather for chemical application.
- The self-sown cereal green bridge has been dramatically reduced through grazing and the hot weather.

PASTURES
- Stock feed is in good supply and quality following the December rains, however sandy rises are still prone to wind erosion.
- Lincoln weed growth on paddocks or areas of paddocks that were drifting in 2008 has assisted in stabilising the soil.

Lower Eyre Peninsula

By Kieran Wauchope

WEATHER
- Mild to warm conditions were experienced early then extreme heat and strong winds came later in the month.
- Port Lincoln reached 44.7°C with many days hotter than the decile 9 record of 32°C.
- Some winds caused mild soil erosion on ground with little cover.

RAINFALL
- No significant rainfall was received.
CROPS

- There has been little paddock activity during the month.
- Farmers keeping themselves busy with fencing, machinery maintenance and stock work.
- Some are still trying to spray summer weeds, but weather conditions have made this hard.

PASTURES

- Stock still grazing stubbles.
- Cover is satisfactory in most areas except for those which were very dry last year, ie north of Tumby Bay along the east coast and some along the west coast.

Yorke Peninsula

WEATHER

By Peter Fulwood

- Warm to hot with very hot conditions late in the month.
- Mean daily maximum temperatures were around 2-3°C above average.

RAINFALL

- Very little rainfall recorded during the month.
- Monthly rainfall was well below average with totals ranging from 0 mm (Price, Minlaton, Kadina) to 3.8 mm (Paskeville).

CROPS

- Herbicides applied to control summer weeds, however very hot, dry conditions in the second half of the month limited opportunities for spraying.
- Summer weed populations have declined as result of spraying, grazing and hot weather, reducing the risk of a green bridge carrying over disease.
- Some cabling for snail control particularly later in the month, when temperatures were sufficiently high.
- Clay delving was carried out in some areas of northern Yorke Peninsula.

PASTURES

- Paddock feed is generally satisfactory with most crop stubbles still holding up in the dry conditions.
- Cover on pasture paddocks has declined and will need to be carefully managed to avoid overgrazing.

Lower North

WEATHER

By Peter Fulwood

- Warm to hot with heat wave conditions late in the month.
- Mean daily maximum temperatures were around 2-3°C above average.
- Strong winds on a couple of occasions raised dust from a few exposed paddocks.

RAINFALL

- Very little rainfall recorded during the month.
- Monthly rainfall was well below average with totals ranging from 0 mm (Lyndoch, Eudunda) to 6.4 mm (Owen).

CROPS

- Harvest was completed across the district.
- The hot, dry conditions limited opportunities for effective spraying for summer weed control, especially later in the month.
- The price of some herbicides has come down, which has helped lower the cost of weed control.

PASTURES

- Paddock feed is currently adequate with most crop stubbles still holding up in the dry conditions.
Perennial pastures such as lucerne responded to the December rain and continue to provide feed in some areas.

**Mid North**

*WEATHER*

- The last half of the month has been very hot with hot nights.

*RAINFALL*

- No rain fell during the month.

*CROPS*

- Green, self-sown cereal growth and weeds grew prolifically, but were burnt off by the hot weather.
- Many applied knockdown herbicide early in the month.
- The green cereal growth presents an increased risk of rusts in particular this season.
- Little field work occurred during the month for most.

*PASTURES*

- Stock are grazing stubbles and the green growth.
- Dams are in need of a top-up in many areas.

**Upper North**

*WEATHER*

- Conditions during January were extremely hot with several days experiencing strong winds.
- Thunderstorms brought heavy falls of rain to isolated areas of the district.

*RAINFALL*

- Rainfall for January was generally well below average for most of the district.
- Quorn received 10 mm and Yongala 8 mm from thunderstorms in late January.

*CROPS*

- Harvest was completed in the first week of January in all parts of the district.
- Large areas were sprayed to control summer weeds and self-sown cereals.
- Control was difficult due to the hot weather stressing weeds, leaving only a short period every day when spraying could be carried out successfully.
- The drop in the price of some herbicides has made weed control significantly cheaper.
- Some growers have persisted with killing weeds with cultivation, exposing soil to wind and water erosion.
- The large drop in fertiliser prices has also been very welcome, although some growers who had bought fertiliser last year have missed out on the price drop.
- Isolated heavy thunderstorm activity in the last few days of the month caused some damage.
- Morale was extremely low in many parts of the district in early January, with many growers starting to question their long term future in farming.
- Following holidays and a drop in fertiliser and chemical prices enthusiasm for farming has been somewhat restored.

*PASTURES*

- Stubble and surface cover levels are generally very good following the growth from rains in November and December.
- This growth has now dried off, but will ensure sufficient feed for livestock for the next few months.
Central Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island

By David Creeper

WEATHER
- Temperatures during the first half of January remained on average, however the last week of January has seen temperatures well above average with a series of consecutive days over 40ºC.
- These extremely high temperatures coupled with low humidity have made it very difficult for irrigated crops, and also has increased the risk of fire in crop stubbles and pasture paddocks with dry growth.
- High temperatures and low rainfall and low humidity have meant that the bushfire risk on properties is extreme and growers will need to ensure that their bushfire plan is adequate given the seasonal conditions prevailing at the moment.

RAINFALL
- Rainfall for January has been well below average.
- Kingscote recorded the highest rainfall of just 3 mm, which is well below average.

CROPS
- Most crops have been harvested with yields being variable, particularly on Kangaroo Island.
- Grain quality has also been affected by rain during harvest and some crops have been downgraded as a result.
- The combination of lower yields and downgraded crops will have an impact on the final returns received by landholders.

PASTURES
- Pasture growth is short in most areas as a result of poor spring growth.
- Hand feeding will be required as dry matter is eaten by stock. Some landholders will be looking to minimise the impact on paddocks by either feed lotting or hand feeding livestock in confined areas.
- Irrigated pastures have been placed under pressure due to the high January temperatures and lack of rain.
- Dry conditions and very high temperatures in the later part of January have meant that water for livestock could be a problem in some areas. Some landholders on Kangaroo Island will be carting water for livestock as a result of below average rains over winter and spring not replenishing dams.

Northern Murray Mallee

By Chris McDonough

WEATHER
- There were many hot days toward the end of the month, with temperatures at Loxton being above average.
- There was some raised dust on a few days of strong winds.

RAINFALL
- January was a very dry month for the Northern Mallee with Loxton only receiving 0.2 mm (average 15 mm), with only a few areas receiving an odd small rainfall event.

CROPS
- Harvest was generally completed prior to January.
- As previously reported yields were generally below average, but slightly better than expected given the low growing season rainfall and very poor season finish, with variable grain quality.
- While there was quite a bit of summer weed spraying in early January, the lack of rainfall has meant that very little spraying occurred later in the month.
- Soil cover remains reasonably good on most paddocks, however there are some paddocks with low levels of cover that are at risk of erosion.

PASTURES
- Stubble paddocks and summer weed growth have generally maintained livestock feed at present.
Southern Murray Mallee

**WEATHER**
- Hot to very hot conditions, particularly late in the month.
- Occasional strong winds.

**RAINFALL**
- Very dry with monthly totals well below average.

**CROPS**
- Hot, dry conditions in the second half of the month limited opportunities for summer weed spraying.
- Summer weed populations have declined as result of spraying, grazing and hot weather, thereby reducing the risk of a green bridge causing disease issues at seeding.

**PASTURES**
- Paddock feed and cover are generally satisfactory.

Lower Murray

**WEATHER**
- Temperatures for January in Murray Bridge have been very hot with 46°C reached on the 28th.
- The average temperature for the month was 32°C, almost 4°C higher than the long term average.
- There have been few strong winds, with no erosion on well-covered paddocks.

**RAINFALL**
- There was no significant rainfall in Murray Bridge for January.

**CROPS**
- Harvesting has been completed in all areas.
- Yields were about average with quality variable.
- Many farmers have been busy controlling summer weeds following December rains.
- The very warm weather is making ideal spraying conditions rare.
- With the exception of some pulse crop stubbles, ground cover is good.

**PASTURES**
- The majority of producers have sufficient pasture feed.
- Most pasture paddocks still have good cover for erosion prevention.
- Hay and feed grain supply is good.

Upper South East

**WEATHER**
- Warm to hot with some very hot days late in the month.
- Mean daily maximum temperatures varied from 1-3°C above average.
- Occasional strong winds raised dust from a few exposed paddocks.

**RAINFALL**
- Very little rainfall recorded during the month.
- Monthly rainfall was well below average with totals ranging from 0 mm (Keith) to 1.8 mm (Padthaway).

**CROPS**
- Harvest has been completed across the district.
- Spraying for summer weed control, especially melons, continued from last month, but was limited by the very hot, dry conditions in the latter half of January.
Harvesting of dryland lucerne seed crops is due to commence in the next couple of weeks, however yields are expected to be down as a result of the very dry spring and the recent very hot, dry weather.

Irrigated lucerne seed crops are now generally at full flowering with harvest expected in March, however the recent heat wave conditions have seen leaf and flower drop as growers struggled to keep up with the water needs of their crops.

PASTURES

Paddock feed is currently adequate with stubbles continuing to provide some feed, however much of the green pick from the December rainfall has now dried off.

Perennial pastures such as lucerne continue to provide feed in some areas, although growth has slowed with the current very dry conditions.

Limited supplementary feeding is likely to commence shortly.

Lower South East

By Peter Fulwood

WEATHER

Warm to hot with some very hot days in inland areas late in the month.

Mean daily maximum temperatures were around 1-2°C above average.

Occasional strong winds raised dust from a few exposed paddocks.

RAINFALL

Very little rainfall recorded during the month.

Monthly rainfall was well below average with totals ranging from 1 mm (Policemans Point) to 7.6 mm (Millicent).

CROPS

Harvest is finished, apart from a few bean crops in the Millicent area which are expected to be reaped in the next couple of weeks.

Overall crop yields have varied from generally below average in northern areas to near average and slightly above in some southern parts.

Spraying for summer weed control commenced during the month as harvest was completed.

Most dryland lucerne seed crops are looking quite good following the widespread December rainfall.

PASTURES

Paddock feed is currently adequate with stubbles and pasture residues available, although much of the green pick from the December rainfall has started to thin out.

Perennial pastures continue to provide feed, although growth has slowed with the current very dry conditions.

Limited supplementary feeding is likely to commence in the next few weeks.
## Crop Production Estimates

**January 2009**

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## PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND RESOURCES SOUTH AUSTRALIA - FIELD CROP PRODUCTION ESTIMATES

### January 2009

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### South Australian Field Crops

**Area sown for grain, grain production, five year average and current year estimates**

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<th>2005/06</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
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**Notes:**

Current year estimates assume average rainfall and temperature conditions for the remainder of the growing season.

Grain estimates are for total grain production and include grain delivered for immediate sale and warehousing plus grain retained on farm for seed, feed and future sale.

Hay estimates are for total hay production and include all pasture, cereal and other crops cut for hay, both dryland and irrigated.

The estimates are based on information provided by Rural Solutions SA District Reporters from a variety of sources, and are updated throughout the season as conditions change and further information becomes available.

They are intended to be used only as estimates of crop area and grain production and are current at the time of preparation of the report.

The estimates are updated using ABS census data as available.

Prepared by Peter Fulwood 31 January 2009