

MONTANA CROP PROGRESS



United States Department of Agriculture
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
MONTANA FIELD OFFICE
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 Cooperating with the Montana Department of Agriculture



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CROP PROGRESS AND CONDITION MONTH OF DECEMBER 2023

AGRICULTURAL SUMMARY: The month of December brought above average temperatures and mostly below normal precipitation to Montana, according to the Mountain Regional Field Office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA. Data from the High Plains Regional Climate Center (HPRCC) indicate that temperatures ran about 6 degrees above average in the west, and as much as 12-15 degrees above average moving north and east. Moisture received was about 0.75 inches below average to normal for the majority of Montana. In some parts of the northwest, moisture levels were as much as 1.5 inches or more below normal. Only isolated areas of the State received precipitation levels that were slightly above normal. Drought conditions changed significantly according to the U.S. Drought Monitor report released on December 28, 2023. The amount of land rated drought free fell to 44 percent, compared to 61 percent as reported on November 30. Abnormal dryness was found in 37 percent of Montana, compared to 26 percent on the same November release. Moderate drought stood at 16 percent, and severe drought was found in 3 percent of the State. These conditions were rated 8 and 5 percent, respectively, at the end of November. No major snow events have occurred in Broadwater County since October. The winter thus far has been very mild, especially as compared to last December. Producers were concerned about the future effects of the lack of moisture on the upcoming season. Temperatures were running well above normal in Mineral, Missoula, and Ravalli Counties. Moisture levels were below normal. Snowpack in Ravalli County was reportedly 40 percent of normal. Foggy conditions and inversions occurred in Northern Ravalli County, and in parts of Missoula County. Livestock were doing well for this time of year. There was, however, a report of a wolf attack in Ravalli County that resulted in the death of a cow. Lack of moisture remained a concern for the new irrigation season. A reporter from Valley County also indicated that the winter has so far has been mild, and moisture was needed.

Note: Monthly reports will be released for January for January on January 29, 2024; for February on February 26, 2024; and for March on March 25, 2024.

LIVESTOCK PROGRESS

Commodity	Current report (percent)	Previous report (percent)	Previous year (percent)	5-year average (percent)
Cattle and calves				
Receiving supplemental feed	73	64	95	NA
Sheep and lambs				
Receiving supplemental feed	72	61	88	NA

NA – not available
 (–) – zero

SOIL MOISTURE CONDITION

	Current report (percent)	Previous report (percent)	Previous year (percent)	5-year average (percent)
Topsoil moisture				
Very short	46	17	19	NA
Short	33	33	27	NA
Adequate	21	49	53	NA
Surplus	--	1	1	NA
Subsoil moisture				
Very short	48	36	27	NA
Short	31	25	40	NA
Adequate	21	38	32	NA
Surplus	--	1	1	NA

NA – not available
 (–) – zero

CROP AND PASTURE AND RANGE CONDITION

Commodity	Current report (percent)	Previous report (percent)	Previous year (percent)	5-year average (percent)
Grazing accessibility				
Open	87	NA	23	NA
Difficult	5	NA	37	NA
Closed	8	NA	40	NA
Pasture and range				
Very poor	36	16	24	NA
Poor	24	18	17	NA
Fair	17	24	28	NA
Good	21	39	30	NA
Excellent	2	3	1	NA
Winter wheat				
Very poor	8	--	1	NA
Poor	13	5	10	NA
Fair	36	37	67	NA
Good	26	21	16	NA
Excellent	17	37	6	NA
Winter wheat – wind damage				
None	73	NA	82	NA
Light	3	NA	13	NA
Moderate	24	NA	4	NA
Severe	--	NA	1	NA
Winter wheat – freeze and drought damage				
None	73	NA	77	NA
Light	27	NA	22	NA
Moderate	--	NA	1	NA
Severe	--	NA	--	NA
Winter wheat – protectiveness of snow cover				
Very poor	87	NA	1	NA
Poor	10	NA	36	NA
Fair	1	NA	25	NA
Good	2	NA	14	NA
Excellent	--	NA	24	NA

NA – not available

(--) – zero