

MONTANA CROP PROGRESS



United States Department of Agriculture
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
MONTANA FIELD OFFICE
 P.O. BOX 150969 · Lakewood, CO 80215-0969
 Cooperating with the Montana Department of Agriculture



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Eric Sommer
 (800) 392-3202

CROP PROGRESS AND CONDITION MONTH OF MARCH 2024

AGRICULTURAL SUMMARY: The month of March brought mostly above normal temperatures and varying precipitation to Montana, according to the Mountain Regional Field Office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA. Much of the State experienced temperatures ranging from near average to about 4 degrees above average, according to data from the High Plains Regional Climate Center (HPRCC). Isolated areas in Richland and Big Horn Counties sustained average temperatures as many as 8 degrees above normal. Various north-central, western, and southern portions of the State experienced temperatures, on average, running about two degrees below the norm. Much of eastern, north-central, and western Montana received precipitation in a range of about 0.75 inch below average to normal. The remainder of the State received precipitation reaching only as much as about 0.75 inch above normal. The drought lingered on according to the U.S. Drought Monitor report released on March 21, 2024. The amount of land rated drought free stood at 5 percent, compared with 12 percent as reported on February 22, 2014. Abnormal dryness was found in 53 percent of the State, up 8 percentage points. Moderate drought stood at 25 percent, compared with 22 percent as found in the report for February 22. Severe drought conditions fell to 16 percent, down 4 percentage points. Extreme drought conditions were unchanged at 1 percent. The very dry conditions in Mineral, Missoula, and Ravalli Counties provided excellent conditions for calving. Some operators, however, reported scour in calves due to the warmer days and colder nights. Pneumonia was also a concern in the new calves because of the temperature fluctuations. Fields were open for dragging and tilling. Recent storms provided much needed relief from the dry conditions. Golden Valley and Musselshell Counties reported 3-4 inches of snow over the past weekend. Wibaux County received snow in a range of 4-6 inches. Winter storms in Valley County the third week of March also provided some much-needed moisture as well.

Note: The first weekly report will be released on Monday, April 1, 2024.

CROP AND LIVESTOCK PROGRESS

Commodity	Current report (percent)	Previous report (percent)	Previous year (percent)	5-year average (percent)
Winter wheat				
Breaking dormancy	13	NA	NA	NA
Cattle and calves				
Cows calved.....	15	13	13	NA
Receiving supplemental feed	97	97	97	NA
Sheep and lambs				
Ewes lambled	12	9	8	NA
Receiving supplemental feed	99	96	98	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	10	7	4	NA
Short	43	45	19	NA
Adequate	47	48	75	NA
Surplus	--	--	2	NA
Subsoil moisture				
Very short	19	23	10	NA
Short	60	48	42	NA
Adequate	21	29	46	NA
Surplus	--	--	2	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	59	64	28	NA
Difficult	21	23	24	NA
Closed	20	13	48	NA
Pasture and range				
Very poor	13	24	18	NA
Poor	39	38	32	NA
Fair	46	34	26	NA
Good	2	3	24	NA
Excellent	--	1	--	NA
Winter wheat				
Very poor	1	--	--	NA
Poor	3	2	6	NA
Fair	48	53	63	NA
Good	44	41	30	NA
Excellent	4	4	1	NA
Winter wheat – wind damage				
None	50	38	64	NA
Light	31	38	25	NA
Moderate	19	24	11	NA
Severe	--	--	--	NA
Winter wheat – freeze and drought damage				
None	63	43	80	NA
Light	23	24	12	NA
Moderate	12	23	8	NA
Severe	2	10	--	NA
Winter wheat – protectiveness of snow cover				
Very poor	17	12	1	NA
Poor	31	58	32	NA
Fair	35	27	34	NA
Good	14	3	24	NA
Excellent	3	--	9	NA

NA – not available

(--) – zero