Crop and Pasture Report
South Australia
2018-19 SEEDING AND CROP ESTABLISHMENT
JULY 2018
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State Summary

WEATHER

• May rainfall was above average in the southern part of the Lower South East and average to below average in all other areas.

• June rainfall was below average in the south-eastern part of Western Eyre Peninsula, Eastern Eyre Peninsula, Lower Eyre Peninsula, Yorke Peninsula, Mid North, Lower North, Kangaroo Island, Murray Plains Far West Coast, Upper North, Upper South East and northern parts of the Northern Murray Mallee and western parts of the Northern and Southern Mallee and average in other districts.

• Areas on Eastern Eyre Peninsula and Southern Yorke Peninsula were very much below average.

• Almost 90% of the North East Pastoral area has received below average rainfall for the six months to the end of June with more than 50% receiving very much below average and small areas on the NSW and Queensland boarders receiving their lowest rainfall on record.

• Over 50% of the North Western Pastoral areas has received below average rainfall for the six months to the end of June with approximately 10 to 20% being very much below average.

• Mean maximum temperatures for May were above average on Kangaroo Island and the southern part of Lower Eyre Peninsula, and average in all other areas.

• Maximum temperatures for June were average in all agricultural districts.

• Minimum temperatures for June were average on Western Eyre Peninsula, Lower Eyre Peninsula and the western part of Eastern Eyre Peninsula, and below average in all other areas.

• Several days of strong winds and numerous frosts in inland districts occurred during this period.

CROPS

• The crop area sown is smaller than average at 3.8 million hectares. Production is estimated at 6.9 million tonnes due to the below average yield potential, a result of the dry autumn and early winter.

• In most areas of the State soil moisture reserves are low to moderate with only Kangaroo Island and the Lower South East having good reserves.

• Marginal soil moisture during May caused some farmers to stop sowing. Farmers that continued seeding finished by early June. Those that stopped in May resumed seeding following rain in early to mid-June, finishing in mid to late June.

• Not enough rain has fallen for farmers to complete seeding on parts of Western Eyre Peninsula and the non-wetting sands on Eastern and Lower Eyre Peninsula.

• Crop area sown has been reduced by 15% on Western Eyre Peninsula and 10% on Eastern Eyre Peninsula.

• Many farmers in the lower rainfall areas reduced the area sown to canola and pulse crops because of the late break to the season and low reserves of soil moisture. These crops were replaced with either barley, hay, sown or self-regenerating pasture.

• Even in some of the more reliable cropping areas, farmers have reduced the area sown to canola and lentils, with most replaced by barley.

• The germination of early-sown crops was staggered, particularly on heavier soils types, due to marginal soil moisture. Most crops have now fully emerged, although with variable stages of growth.

• Despite the dry conditions, most canola crops have germinated well with adequate plant establishment.

• In parts of the Lower North, the heavy black self-mulching clay soils have not received sufficient moisture to wet-up and crop emergence on these soils has been poor.
• Early-sown crops in areas that received reasonable falls of rain have grown well and cereals are at mid-tillering stage. Later-sown crops have been slow to emerge and grow due to cold conditions in mid to late June.

• Large quantities of hay reserves have been used on-farm or sold, depleting stocks across the State. Many farmers with livestock have increased the area sown for hay with the intent of replenishing stocks.

• Nitrogen fertiliser was applied to some early-sown crops ahead of rains in mid-June.

• Mice numbers have fallen across the State with little activity being reported. Farmers baited high-risk areas and crops immediately after seeding with good results.

• Snail numbers are relatively low in most areas of the State, although they continue to be a problem on parts of Yorke Peninsula and the Upper South East.

• Insect pests have generally been at low levels but redlegged earth mite and lucerne flea have caused damage to emerging crops and pastures in some districts.

PASTURES

• Pastures on Upper Eyre Peninsula have not established well due to dry soils and cold conditions. Livestock producers are feeding hay and grain to stock, in either containment areas or pasture paddocks. Feeding is expected to continue for at least four weeks and possibly longer in some areas.

• Pastures in most other districts have germinated but growth is very slow and only providing minimal feed.

• Pastures sown for feed have variable amounts of growth. Early-sown pastures that germinated in May are being grazed. Later sown or later germinating paddocks have grown slowly, with insufficient growth to allow grazing without risk of uprooting plants.

• Dry conditions have slowed the growth of perennial pastures with most only providing feed towards the end of June.

• Reserves of hay and grain on-farm are very low in most areas of the State with large amounts being sold into pastoral areas and interstate. An increasing number of farmers are feeding sheep pellets to stock.

• The shortage of feed might prompt some farmers to put livestock onto newly emerged crops and pastures, despite the erosion risk and increased plant recovery period.

• Most livestock are in reasonable condition, although lactating ewes have lost weight in most districts, despite high levels of supplementary feeding.

• Lambing percentages have been variable depending on the condition and nutrition of ewes but reports are that most are lower than normal.

• Many irrigated Lucerne stands in the Upper South East have been over-sown with a cereal for hay production, due to poor lucerne seed prices.

PASTORAL AREAS

• Feed levels in many of the pastoral areas are low and pastoralists are beginning to reduce stock numbers.

KEY LINKS TO OTHER INFORMATION


Bureau of Meteorology - Weather and rainfall observations: www.bom.gov.au
NOTES ON CALCULATION OF CROP ESTIMATES

Crop estimates for the current year 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 provide an indication of crop potential at the time the report is prepared.

The estimates are updated using ABS census data when available.
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## Table 2: Crop Estimates Against Five Year Average

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District Reports

Western Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER
- Rainfall for May and June was average to below average and highly variable.
- Mean maximum and minimum temperatures were average for May and June. Multiple light frosts were recorded in inland districts.
- There were a number of days with strong winds in early June.

CROPS
- Patchy rainfall resulted in a number of delays to seeding. At the end of June farmers with heavier soil types who received good early rainfall (at Elliston, Streaky Bay and Mt Cooper) had finished sowing most of their intended program (>85%), however germination has been patchy.
- The area of wheat sown west of Ceduna has been significantly reduced and there has also been a reduction in the area sown (estimated 20% on average) around Wirrulla.
- Paddocks with more productive soil types around Minnipa and Wudinna were being sown in the last week of June following mid-June rainfall.
- Farmers on non-wetting sands in Central Eyre districts (Koongawa, Kyancutta and Warramboo) are waiting for good rains to wet up soil profiles before sowing these paddocks and it is estimated that only around 65% of the intended crop area has been sown on these soils.
- The area of crop will be reduced as very low feed levels have resulted in livestock producers leaving a paddock or two for pasture feed or to cut hay later if seasonal conditions permit.
- The area of canola has been reduced by an estimated 25% and pulse crop area has also been reduced. Farmers have replaced these with barley or oats for grazing or cutting for hay if favourable seasonal conditions occur.
- Large areas of the region have been sown but are yet to emerge (including around Poochera, Mudamuckla and Nunjikomitta). These paddocks are at risk of wind erosion.
- Early-sown crops in areas with good rains earlier in the year are growing well and beginning to tiller.
- Insect pest numbers are generally low.

PASTURES
- Pastures have not established well, due to dry soils and cold conditions, and all livestock producers are feeding hay and grain to stock.
- Reserves of hay and grain are very low, with little available locally and becoming more difficult to buy from other areas of the State. Some farmers are accessing warehoused grain to feed their livestock, however most have sold all of their grain.
- Annual grasses will be left in most pastures to provide feed. Grasses will be spray topped in spring to reduce seed set.
- Some farmers may put livestock onto newly emerged crops and pastures because of the shortage of feed but this will be at the risk of erosion and damage to plants.
- Most farmers sold surplus stock to preserve feed supplies at the end of last year, keeping only breeding stock. Many ewes are either pregnant or have lambs at foot and will not be able to be sold until lambs have been weaned.
- A number of farmers have used pregnancy-testing this year to identify dry sheep as a means of reducing stock numbers.
Lower Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- May rainfall was below average in the southern part of the district and average further north. June rainfall was below average across the district.
- Mean maximum and minimum temperatures were average for the period. There were a number of light frosts recorded around Cummins during June.

CROPS

- Rains have provided some moisture in topsoils, but subsoil moisture reserves are very low and follow up rainfall is needed to keep crops growing well.
- Good rainfall at critical times allowed most farmers to finish seeding by the first week of June. Farmers on non-wetting sandy soils near Port Neill are still waiting for adequate rains to wet up the soil enough to complete sowing on those areas.
- Indications are that farmers sowed almost all of their intended crop and so crop areas have not varied significantly from normal.
- Some livestock producers reduced the area of canola and pulse crops and replaced them with barley or vetch and oats for feed or a potential hay cut to replenish supplies.
- Germination has been staggered with crops at varying growth stages even within the same paddock, due to variable rainfall, sowing dates and soil types. Early-sown cereal paddocks are at mid-tillering with later-sown crops yet to emerge. Crops that have emerged look healthy.
- Canola germination has been patchy with plants varying widely in growth stages in the same paddock. Pulses and pastures germinated well, however dry soils and cold conditions have slowed growth considerably.
- Farmers are applying post emergent herbicides; there are some reports of poor efficacy of pre-emergent herbicides due to dry soil conditions.
- Nitrogen was applied to more advanced crops ahead of forecast rain in late June.
- Most farmers treated at least a portion of their crop with insecticide to protect against Russian wheat aphid. Insect numbers on emerging crops and pastures have been generally low.
- There was some bryobia mite reported in early canola crops and usual numbers of redlegged earth mite and lucerne fleas, however numbers of these have fallen with the cold weather.

PASTURES

- Livestock are generally in good health, however pasture paddocks contain little to no feed, and producers are continuing to feed hay and grain to stock. Feed supplies are becoming limited.
- Many farmers have bought hay from outside of the region. Some farmers reporting their stockfeed reserves will last around two to four weeks as at the end of June.
- Pastures and paddocks sown for feed were beginning to germinate at the end of June, however growth has been slowed by cold conditions and it will be several weeks before adequate pasture feed is available.
- Producers are wanting to move stock into pasture paddocks but are concerned that if they do so too early, there will not be enough leaf area left for plants to recover from grazing.
- Most farmers reduced surplus stock numbers at the end of last year. Many have pregnant ewes or ewes with lambs at foot and both ewes and lambs will require feeding until the lambs are weaned and can be sold.
Eastern Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER
• Rainfall for May was below average in the southern part of the district and average in the north. June rainfall was very much below average in south-eastern parts of the district and below average in the rest of the district.
• Mean maximum temperatures were average for the period with minimum temperatures below average in the eastern part of the district during June with several frosts recorded in the last few weeks of June.
• Cold fronts brought strong winds followed by very little rain.

CROPS
• Strong winds resulted in some erosion on lighter-textured soil types.
• Seeding has occurred in several stages. Most seeding was finished by the end of June in districts that received early/extra rainfall, including Kimba, Mitchellville and better soil types around Cleve.
• Continued dry conditions delayed seeding in districts with large areas of non-wetting sands, particularly around Wharminda, Arno Bay, Rudall and Darke Peak. The area of crop sown in these areas will be below average for a second successive year.
• The area sown to canola and pulses has been reduced, replaced by regenerating pasture, sown oats and vetch for grazing/hay or barley.
• Crop germination and development is highly variable within and between districts depending on where rain has fallen and there are large areas where crops have not yet germinated. The canola that has germinated has widely varying growth stages. Cereals are between one leaf and early tillering stages.
• There are reports of farmers re-sowing lighter-textured parts of paddocks near Darke Peak/Kielpa where strong winds at crop emergence resulted in sand blasting of crops on exposed rises.
• Crops near Mitchellville and Kimba have established well with average yield potential. However, crops on the heavier soil types near Cleve and in the Franklin Harbour district are showing symptoms of moisture stress due to dry conditions following germination and require good rains in early July.
• Staggered germination made the timing of herbicide applications difficult.
• Pulse crops generally germinated well but require good rains to maintain healthy growth.
• Mice numbers have dropped as their feed supplies dwindle.
• There were reports of bryobia mite, and small numbers of redlegged earth mite and lucerne flea in establishing crops but cooler conditions have reduced numbers of these pests.

PASTURES
• Pastures contain little to no feed and farmers continue providing hay and grain to stock. Most sheep have been fed in containment areas, however many farmers have turned stock into paddocks to take advantage of early grass weed growth.
• Livestock are generally in good condition but stores of hay and grain are running very short with about one to four weeks of feed on hand. Farmers are finding it difficult to procure feed supplies and only limited supplies of warehoused grain remain.
• Most farmers sold surplus stock at the end of last year. Many sheep producers have pregnant ewes or ewes with lambs at foot and will need to keep supplementary feeding them until lambs are weaned.
• Farmers are concerned about erosion risk and effect on plant recovery of grazing paddocks too early but many feel that they have no choice given a lack of feed reserves.
• Medic pastures and sown vetch have germinated but growth is slow and it may be another four weeks before pastures have sufficient growth to allow grazing.
Upper North

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average to below average for May and average for June.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for the period but minimum temperatures were below average for June. Frequent frosts were recorded in the eastern part of the district during the last two weeks of June.

CROPS

- Stored soil moisture levels are moderate in the topsoil and at depth but dry in between.
- Light rainfall in early May enabled dry-sown crops to germinate and provided some soil moisture to allow sowing of remaining crops.
- Soils quickly dried out and most farmers continued dry-sowing through May, completing their seeding in mid to late May although some waited until it rained in late May and early June to complete sowing.
- On lighter soils, early-sown crops emerged quickly following rain in late April and early May, but on heavier-textured soils there was insufficient moisture for crops to emerge until further rain in late May.
- Most farmers in more reliable areas of the district sowed canola crops following rainfall in late April and early May, however in lower rainfall districts they either dry-sowed canola or substituted it with another grain or feed crop.
- The area sown to pulses has been reduced particularly in the lower rainfall areas, replaced with either barley or pasture.
- There has been a large reduction in the area sown to field peas, due to high risks which all reduce profitability including low price, frost and bacterial blight disease.
- There were reports of some barley seed having low germination. Some farmers tested seed viability before sowing and increased seeding rates accordingly, but a few crops may need to be re-sown.
- Most crops have now emerged, although cold weather and frosts towards the end of June have slowed growth.

PASTURES

- There has been a patchy germination and slow growth of pastures, particularly in the northern most part of the district.
- Farmers have continued to supplement pasture feed or feed stock in confined areas. On-farm feed supplies are beginning to run low and an increasing number of farmers are feeding sheep pellets.
- There have been reports of high fox numbers and numerous wild dogs attacking sheep, with several shot in recent months.
- Large amounts of hay have been sold into NSW and pastoral areas; local supplies are now almost depleted.
Mid North

WEATHER

• May rainfall was below average in the east of the district and average in the remainder of the district. Rainfall for June was below average in most of the district with some areas receiving average rainfall.

• Mean maximum temperatures were average for the period with below average minimum temperatures during June. Frequent frosts were recorded across the district in the last two weeks of June.

CROPS

• There are moderate levels of stored soil moisture in most of the district, following rain in mid-June.

• Despite marginal soil moisture, most farmers continued seeding through May, finishing by late May to early June. Dry conditions prompted some farmers to stop seeding in May and they completed seeding in the third week of June, following reasonable rainfall in early to mid-June.

• Initial crop emergence was very patchy due to marginal soil moisture, particularly on the heavier soil types and in lighter-rainfall areas. Further rain in early to mid-June enabled most of these crops to fully emerge, although there are some crops with less than ideal plant densities.

• Most canola crops have emerged well, albeit with staggered germination. Later-germinating plants are only two or three weeks behind and should catch up in growth, limiting the concerns about timing of herbicide applications.

• Farmers sowed their wheat crops as planned.

• Most canola, bean and lupin crops were sown as planned. Some pulses, particularly peas and lentils, were replaced with barley due to the dry conditions and poorer price outlook.

• Redlegged earth mite and lucerne flea caused minor damage to some crops but generally, numbers have been low.

• Mice numbers have now fallen with farmers baiting areas with higher numbers immediately after seeding with good results.

• Snail numbers are at low levels, due to the prolonged dry conditions.

PASTURES

• Pastures have germinated but growth has been very slow and feed is in short supply.

• Most farmers continued to hand feed livestock, either in confinement areas or in pasture paddocks, to keep them in reasonable condition.

• Lambing percentages have been reasonable, despite the dry conditions, although most are 10 to 20% below average.

• Sown pastures have grown slowly with a few just starting to be grazed but most have not yet achieved sufficient growth.

• Large quantities of hay have been sold to graziers in NSW, Queensland and the pastoral areas of SA and most hay producers have now sold out, only keeping sufficient for their own livestock.
Lower North

WEATHER

- May rainfall was below average in the north east and average in the rest of the district.
- June rainfall was below average across the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for the period with below average minimum temperatures in June.

CROPS

- Soils across the district have low amounts of plant available water and most of this is in the top soil.
- Farmers began dry-sowing in late April and continued through May with marginal soil moisture. Most completed seeding by late May.
- Crops have emerged well on most soils with earlier-sown cereals at early tillering growth stage. Heavy black self-mulching clays have not received sufficient rain resulting in poor crop emergence.
- Most canola crops have emerged and established well although some farmers decided not to sow as much canola as they had originally intended because of the dry conditions.
- The area sown to beans has continued to fall and farmers also reduced the area sown to lentils, due to the poor price outlook.
- The reduced area of canola and pulses has been mostly replaced with barley.
- The area of chickpeas has increased slightly but the area of other crops has remained relatively stable.
- There are currently low levels of insect pests in crops and pastures.
- Mice numbers have fallen with only some farmers baiting paddocks after seeding or around fence lines.

PASTURES

- There is very little pasture feed in the western part of the district, however further east more rain has fallen in the hills providing adequate supplies of pasture feed.
- Livestock across the district are in reasonable condition.
- Hay reserves have been depleted with large quantities of hay being sold interstate.
Yorke Peninsula

WEATHER
• Rainfall was average for May and below average for June with an area around Minlaton very much below average.
• Mean maximum temperatures were average for the period, while mean minimum temperatures have been average to below average.
• Several frosts occurred in the last two weeks of June.

CROPS
• Soil moisture levels are adequate for most of northern Yorke Peninsula but marginal on southern Yorke Peninsula.
• Seeding progressed through May and most farmers finished in late May or early June.
• The dryer soils resulted in staggered germination with some crops only emerging in late June.
• Early-sown barley crops on northern Yorke Peninsula are at late tillering and wheat ranges from three leaf to mid-tillering stage.
• Some nitrogen was applied on second-year cereal crops and on sand hills prior to the rain in mid-June.
• Canola has had variable emergence with crops sown in mid-April at budding stage, while later sown crops have low plant densities at a range of growth stages.
• Lentil and chickpea crops have just started branching and post-emergent grass control herbicides are being applied.
• Lucerne flea has been damaging cereal crops on northern Yorke Peninsula not protected with insecticide seed dressing. Affected crops have been sprayed to reduce damage.
• Net blotch has started to develop in barley crops and yellow leaf spot in wheat crops, particularly on Southern Yorke Peninsula, due to wetter conditions in June.
• Mice numbers and activity have reduced with farmers baiting high risk paddocks before and straight after seeding, achieving excellent results.
• Snails continue to cause damage but farmers have been actively baiting areas where numbers are high.
• Only minor changes to seeding intentions were made, mainly due to unavailability of seed, particularly canola.

PASTURES
• There is minimal pasture feed in paddocks, due to insufficient autumn rains to germinate pasture medic and broadleaf weeds.
• Some pastures sown by the start of May should be advanced enough for grazing in early July.
• Livestock are in reasonable condition, due to the high amounts of hay and grain fed to them over autumn and early winter. Supplementary feeding will be reduced as pasture feed becomes available.
• Early grazed pasture paddocks have no feed left and will need time to recover before further grazing.
• Hay and straw reserves not fed to livestock locally has been sold to farmers in the eastern states to feed their breeding stock.
• Lambing percentages have been excellent due to the mild weather in April and May.
• No significant lamb losses have been reported from recent frosts and cold, windy weather, as graziers have sheltered stock in scrub and feedlots.
Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula & Kangaroo Island

WEATHER
• Rainfall was average for May and average to below average for June.
• Mean maximum temperatures were average for May and June.
• Mean minimum temperatures were average to below average with frequent frosts during June.

CROPS
Central Hills/Fleurieu
• Soil moisture levels are low and rapidly being depleted.
• Some farmers stopped seeding due to the dry soil conditions, while others continued and completed sowing in mid-June.
• Crop emergence has been slow and patchy, depending on soil type and rainfall.
• The area sown to canola and pulse crops has been reduced, replaced with barley, wheat and hay crops.

Kangaroo Island
• There are good levels of soil moisture and sowing was finished by mid to late June.
• All crops have emerged, although early-sown crops, affected by dry conditions in May, had a staggered germination. Late-sown crops have been slow to emerge and grow during the cold conditions in late June.
• Crop area and type has remained stable with an increase in the area sown for hay, intended to replenish feed stocks.
• At this stage, most crops have potential for average yields.
• High levels of redlegged earth mite caused damage to all emerging crops with widespread control required.
• Vegetable beetle caused damage to emerging canola crops.

PASTURES
Central Hills/Fleurieu
• Pastures have germinated but growth has been slow so there is limited paddock feed available.
• Supplementary feeding of livestock with hay and grain has been ongoing and reserves are running low.
• Livestock are in reasonable condition, but most ewes have lost weight with reports that lambing percentages are lower than normal.

Kangaroo Island
• Pasture growth has been variable, with good growth in areas that received rain in early May.
• Pastures on non-wetting sands have emerged poorly with limited growth, while those on loamy soils have established well.
• Across the district, pasture growth is around average.
• Water supplies in dams are low as very little run-off has occurred.
• Livestock vary from good to poor condition.
• Lambing rates have been highly variable depending on ewe condition and nutrition.
Lower Murray

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average to below average for May and below average for June with some areas receiving less than 40mm rainfall for the year to-date. Rainfall has been light with only one fall above 10mm.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for the period with below average minimum temperatures for June.
- Frequent frosts occurred in June.

CROPS

- Most top soils are now wet enough to germinate crops after a series of rains, however crop emergence has been patchy and crop growth is slow.
- Dry-seeding continued in May however many farmers decided to stop or slow seeding until rain fell.
- The completion of seeding was later than normal as farmers waited for enough moisture to finish sowing.
- Snail numbers are very low, depleted by the long dry period.
- Mice numbers and activity has fallen significantly, with little baiting required after seeding.
- Some farmers reduced and changed their cropping programs, moving away from pulses and canola, and sowing more feed for livestock.
- There has been a significant increase in the area sown to barley.
- Soil cover is low with sheep continuing to graze stubbles for a longer period than normal, due to the late break to the season.
- Many paddocks have been over-grazed and after recent wind events, the district is looking bare, with little vegetative cover.

PASTURES

- Extensive supplementary feeding has taken place as farmers run down feed reserves on farm in an effort to maintain breeding livestock.
- Most ewes are in poor condition following lambing, despite extensive supplementary feeding but lambs are generally in good condition.
- Pasture feed is very low as there was not enough rain until early June to get a good germination.
- Dairy farmers irrigated right through autumn and river flat pastures were performing well until recent frost events.
Northern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average to below average for May and June.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for the period. Mean minimum temperatures were below average for June, with frequent frost in the last two weeks of June.
- Strong winds occurred on numerous occasions throughout the period.

CROPS

- Stored soil moisture levels are generally low, and crops will be relying on good spring rainfall to reach average yield potential.
- Farmers have completed seeding, with some of the larger farmers, or those who waited for opening rains to commence, only finishing in the third to fourth week of June.
- Most farmers have sown their intended cropping area. However, the late and light rainfall season break has seen a slight reduction in lentil, chickpea and canola area, replaced with barley.
- While some deep sandy and shallow stony soils have been suffering from lack of moisture and patchy emergence, most of the better soil has established well and benefitted from the adequate June rainfall.
- The eastern and southern sides of the district have received slightly higher rainfall with crops having a higher yield potential than the northwestern areas of the district.
- At present there appear to be no major insect or disease concerns within crops.

PASTURES

- Pasture feed levels are very low with farmers maintaining livestock with hay and grain.
- Grazing of early-sown feed paddocks started in late June, which should begin to relieve feed shortages.
- Many farmers have commenced or are considering grazing cereal crops during their early growth stages.
- Some confinement feeding is taking place by farmers who are well set up for this, while other farmers are taking advantage of high sheep market prices to reduce numbers.
- There are some erosion concerns on sand hills where both pulse and cereal stubbles, already diminished by the poor 2017 season, have been grazed.
Southern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Rainfall was average during May and average to below average for June.
- Thunderstorms brought patchy, variable rainfall across the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for the period with minimum temperatures below average for June.
- There were frequent frosts in late June.

CROPS

- Dry-seeding began in April and continued into May.
- The opening to the season has been later than normal. The variable rainfall mid-May, followed by showers later in the month, enabled most of the crop to be sown and partially emerge.
- Showery weather in the second week of June brought falls of between 10-30mm, enabling remaining crops to emerge and established crops to grow.
- Farmers who started dry-seeding completed their seeding on schedule while farmers with non-wetting sands waited for rain, completing seeding around two weeks later than normal.
- Some farmers began spreading nitrogen fertiliser on early-sown crops ahead of the rain in mid-June. Enough rain was received to enable the fertiliser to be washed into the soil.
- Most farmers reduced the area of pulse and canola crops and replaced them with mainly barley.
- Some of the earliest sown pasture feed had grown sufficiently by late June to enable it to be grazed.
- Mice numbers have continued to decline with most farmers reporting very little mice activity.
- A series of frosts in the last two weeks of June slowed crop growth and stressed weeds, making weed control more difficult.

PASTURES

- Many ewes have lost condition after lambing despite high levels of supplementary feeding.
- There are reports of low lambing percentages from flocks that lambed in March.
- Sheep are still being hand fed with grain and hay.
- On-farm hay and grain reserves are at very low levels. Some hay was sold to interstate farmers as far as Queensland.
- Permanent pastures such as veldt grass and lucerne have grown in response to the rain and are providing good feed.
- Many farmers are now focusing on maximising the growth of lambs by feeding grain to them to ensure good prices.
Upper South East

WEATHER

- May rainfall was average to above average and June rainfall was average to below average.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for the period. Minimum temperatures were below average for June, with several frosts recorded.

CROPS

- Stored soil moisture is adequate with four to five weeks of stored soil moisture available for crop growth.
- Crops were showing signs of moisture stress prior to significant rains in mid-June.
- Sowing was completed by mid-June, with some late barley sown for livestock feed later in the month.
- Pre-emergent herbicides were not effective due to a lack of rainfall, resulting in poor weed control.
- Dry conditions following seeding has resulted in staggered germination of canola crops. Other crops, sown deeper, have emerged well.
- The later break and cold weather slowed crop emergence and growth.
- Redlegged earth mite is causing damage to emerging crops in some areas. A few cases of redlegged earth mite populations with resistance to insecticides has been confirmed by testing.
- The area sown to dual-purpose crops that can be grazed or harvested for grain, has increased.
- Some pasture, barley, canola and bean crops have been replaced with hay crops such as oats and vetch, due to large quantities of hay being consumed or sold during May and June.
- Snails are an ongoing problem for some farmers. Baiting early or along fence-lines before opening rains has been effective.
- Mice are no longer a problem and only isolated baiting is being conducted.
- Large amounts of hay has been sold to NSW and hay reserves are now low on many properties.
- High livestock prices have resulted in an increased area sown to pasture legumes, replacing beans and lentils in rotations.

PASTURES

- Lucerne planting is still underway with most being planted to renovate old stands. Some marginal cropping country has been taken out of annual cropping and is being planted to lucerne.
- Many irrigated lucerne stands have been over-sown with a cereal for hay production, due to poor lucerne seed prices.
- Pasture and lucerne growth has been slow due to a lack of rainfall earlier in the season.
- Many producers are feeding hay and grain to sheep and cattle. Supplementary feeding of sheep is starting to cease as pasture feed becomes available. Cattle still require supplementary feeding.
- Most lambing has finished but some ewes are still to drop their lambs. Overall, marking percentages have been down by about 10% due to the dry conditions earlier in the year and the late break.
- High fox numbers are being reported.
- Overall livestock condition score is good however some ewes are in poorer condition after lambing. This is largely due to insufficient supplementary feed being provided in late pregnancy, when pastures were establishing.
- There has been an increase in the area of pasture renovation due to the high value of livestock. Early sown pastures are now being grazed. Late-sown pastures have grown slowly.
Lower South East

WEATHER

- May rainfall was average to above average.
- June rainfall was average in the north and below average in the southern part of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were average for the period. Mean minimum temperatures were below average for June.

CROPS

- Soil moisture is at field capacity but without significant waterlogging, due to the drier than normal start to the season.
- The absence of wet conditions enabled seeding to progress.
- A drop in soil temperatures, combined with numerous frosts, has slowed crop growth.
- Most farmers have completed all seeding of pastures and field crops, although some late hay crops were still being planted in late June.
- Crop types and area sown have not varied significantly from last year.
- Localised slug damage has been reported in some emerging crops.
- There have been isolated reports of vegetable weevil and lucerne flea damaging crops.
- There have been high numbers of redlegged earth mite causing damage to both crops and pastures.
- Farmers are beginning to apply post emergent herbicides to control weeds in crops.
- Limited germination of weeds prior to sowing reduced the effectiveness of knockdown herbicides so higher than usual numbers of weeds are starting to emerge in some crops.

PASTURES

- Early pasture growth has been good but recent frosts have slowed growth.
- Most producers have stopped hand-feeding sheep but continue to hand feed cattle.
- Marking percentages of lambs and calves have been good.
- Hay and grain reserves are now low on most farms.
- Some pasture paddocks with poor growth early in the season due to the lack of early rainfall were overgrazed. Pastures did not recover before temperatures cooled and slowed growth.
Pastoral Areas

- Most pastoralists are reducing both cattle and sheep livestock numbers, but are not de-stocking totally at this stage.
- Reduced ground water supply in the Gawler Ranges has limited available livestock water supplies.
- Cattle are being trucked out of the NE Pastoral area, although rain in late June has slowed the movement.
- Some stock from north of Yunta are already not in adequate condition to allow trucking out.
- Shrubs are very dry in most areas and there has been some leaf drop from saltbushes.
- There is a shortage of hay with large quantities bought in the last few months but these supplies are now diminishing.
- Water supplies are starting to dry up where pastoral properties are relying on dams.
- Reports of low lambing percentages, mainly due to poor ewe nutrition but also some high losses from wild dogs.
- Kangaroos are in high numbers.

Morgan / Burra Area

- Low levels of pasture feed but stock are still in reasonable condition.
- Reports of deaths of kangaroos and emus in the Eastern Pastoral area due to a shortage of feed.