Crop and Pasture Report
South Australia

2019-20 WINTER CROP PERFORMANCE

SEPTEMBER 2019
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State Summary

WEATHER

- July rainfall varied from above average in parts of the Lower South East to very much below average in parts of the Eyre Peninsula, Upper North, Yorke Peninsula and Kangaroo Island.
- August rainfall was average in parts of the Adelaide Hills, Lower Murray, Southern Mallee and Upper South East, and below average to very much below average in the remainder of the State.
- In the pastoral region July rainfall was generally below average to very much below average with a few pockets of average rainfall mainly in the North West Pastoral Zone. A number of small areas received their lowest July rainfall on record.
- August rainfall was below average to very much below average across most of the pastoral region with several areas receiving their lowest August rainfall on record.
- Mean maximum temperatures for July were above average to very much above average across the whole State with an area in the Far North West observing the highest mean maximum July temperatures on record.
- Maximum temperatures for August were below average in the South East and average in most other areas of the State.
- Mean minimum temperatures for July varied from average to very much above average with the Fleurieu Peninsula, Adelaide Hills and Lower Murray recording their highest average minimum on record.
- August minimum temperatures were average on the Fleurieu Peninsula and South East and below average to very much below average in the rest of the agricultural areas.

CROPS

- Below average rainfall across most of the State in July and August severely reduced yield potential in most districts to an estimated total SA crop production of 6.2 mt from 3.84 million hectares. This is 23% down on the 10-year average production of 8.0 mt.
- Crop growth advanced rapidly to reproductive stages during August in some districts as crops became moisture stressed. Crops on heavy-textured or shallow soils in parts of Western and Eastern Eyre Peninsula, Upper North, eastern Mid North, northern Lower Murray, and Northern Mallee have begun to prematurely dry-off with very low yield potential.
- Growing season rainfall to the end of August has been highly variable with some areas receiving very much below average growing season rainfall while parts of the Southern Yorke Peninsula and South East are above average.
- Some parts of the State are dealing with the third year and many their second year of very much below average rainfall.
- Soil moisture is high in the Lower South East and moderate in the Southern Mallee and Upper South East but low in all other districts.
- Crops in the Mid North, Lower North, Yorke Peninsula and Lower Eyre Peninsula are near average yield potential, but achieving this will require average spring rainfall.
- Although many areas that were bare in 2018 now have sufficient cover, there are still isolated paddocks with poor cover and several days of strong winds during August caused severe erosion on these areas.
- Severe frosts in a number of districts in mid to late August has caused both head and stem frost. Some severely damaged crops from Wudinna through to Lock and Mangalo have been cut for hay.
• Crops affected by stem frost in the Mid North, Northern Yorke Peninsula and southern Upper North are still being assessed to determine the extent and severity of damage.
• Shortages of nitrogen fertiliser delayed applications in a number of districts with some likely effect on yield where moisture is adequate.
• Septoria tritici leaf disease is present in many susceptible wheat crops across the State. Fungicides have been applied to crops depending on growth stage and yield potential.
• Powdery mildew was present at low levels in a number of districts.
• Net form of net blotch and barley scald have been present in susceptible barley varieties in a number of districts and farmers have applied fungicides to manage these diseases.
• Rhizoctonia root rot was at higher levels than normal on parts of Eyre Peninsula and the Northern Mallee.
• Ascochyta blight is present in many chickpea crops and fungicides are being applied to reduce disease levels. Other pulse leaf diseases have been kept at low levels with targeted fungicide applications.
• Pests and insects have been at low levels with only isolated reports of damage.

PASTURES
• Rapid pasture growth on Lower Eyre Peninsula, Southern Mallee, Southern Yorke Peninsula and the South East. In other districts, growth has been much slower with low amounts of biomass.
• Sown pastures have grown well in most districts and have provided reasonable to good quantities of pasture feed.
• Vetch pastures have grown slowly but should still provide moderate levels of high-quality feed.
• Farmers in lower rainfall districts have opted not to spray out grasses in pastures as much as usual to maintain surface cover for as long as possible. Paddocks will be spray-topped or grasses removed in early spring to prevent grass weeds from setting seed.
• Some farmers with heavier soil types on Eastern Eyre Peninsula and the Upper North have turned livestock onto failed crops, but not on failed crops on sandier soils as they are concerned about wind erosion.
• In districts with poor amounts of pasture, producers have begun reducing livestock numbers.
• Most districts are reporting lower lambing percentages than normal.

PASTORAL AREAS
• Conditions remain dry in most pastoral areas with very low amounts of quality forage available.
• Most producers, both cattle and sheep, have reduced livestock numbers with some properties totally de-stocking and others continuing to reduce numbers.
• Many areas have had their longest period of non-useful rain (less than 5 mm) since the early 1950s.
• Pastoralists are not expecting drought-breaking rains now until monsoonal conditions develop in northern Australia.
• Some properties have put stock onto agistment in other areas. However there is very limited agistment available making it expensive and difficult to find.
• Many producers are considering how they will recover when it does rain so have retained breeding stock where possible either by buying fodder or agisting.
• Pastoralists have continued to sell stock to both reduce stocking rates and generate cash flow.
KEY LINKS TO OTHER INFORMATION

Department for Environment and Water - Soil and Land Condition monitoring:

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.
### Crop Estimates

**TABLE 1: CROP ESTIMATES BY DISTRICT**

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District Reports

Western Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- Rainfall was very much below average in most of the district in July and below average in August.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for July and average for August.
- Mean minimum temperatures were average to above average for July and average to below average for August with numerous frosts recorded in inland areas in mid to late August.

CROPS

- Crop growth has progressed rapidly during this period with most crops at flowering to early grain fill.
- Soil profiles in most districts have little stored moisture and crops in all districts were showing signs of moisture stress by the end of August.
- Crops around Nundroo, Mudamuckla and south of Wirrulla to Wudinna maintain yield potentials slightly below the long-term average however good spring rains will be required to see this potential fulfilled.
- Crops near Minnipa, Mt Damper and in the coastal districts around Streaky Bay, Mt Cooper and Elliston have responded well to good rainfalls and have high amounts of biomass with good yield potential.
- The Far West districts between Ceduna and Penong and around Kyancutta have sufficient surface cover for protection from erosion but they have low biomass and yield potentials.
- In Central Eyre Peninsula crops remain healthy on the sandy rises but have begun to hay off on the heavier flats.
- Frost damage has been reported in the Wudinna and Kyancutta area with some crops cut for hay.
- Sandy rises that were bare in 2018 have generally managed to grow sufficient cover to provide protection from wind erosion.
- Some farmers have cut crops with reasonable levels of biomass on heavier soil types recognising that without good spring rainfall they are unlikely to yield well.
- Many farmers have spray-topped pastures instead of selectively removing grasses to try and maintain maximum cover for as long as possible.
- Pest and disease levels have been generally low.

PASTURES

- Livestock are generally in good condition, but many farmers in the Far West have begun supplementary feeding hay and grain with farmers in all districts preparing to supplementary feed their stock throughout summer.
- Most livestock producers have destocked, retaining only their core breeding stock and will wean lambs early to reduce pressure on feed supplies.
- Farmers are hesitant to graze failed crops in these districts as growth is poor and there is a risk of leaving paddocks vulnerable to erosion if grazed.
- Some medic pastures near Streaky Bay, Mt Cooper and Elliston contain enough biomass to be economic to cut for hay. In other districts however plant growth is very poor with pastures rapidly drying during warmer days late in August.
- There have been isolated reports of aphids in medic and vetch pastures.
Lower Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

• July and August rainfall was below average to very much below average across the district.
• Mean maximum temperatures were above average for July and average for August. Mean minimum temperatures were average to above average for July and below to very much below average for August.

CROPS

• Warmer sunny days in August resulted in rapid growth of crops.
• Farmers applied trace elements with in-crop herbicides during this period.
• There has been some urea applied in-crop however farmers have been cautious given limited stored soil moisture and predictions of a drier than average spring.
• Cereal crops look healthy and are at head emergence with good yield potential. Pulse crops are flowering and canola crops are at late flowering to early pod fill stages.
• Some crops north of Karkoo and Butler showed signs of moisture stress toward the end of August.
• Some Cabbage and Turnip aphids have been reported in canola as well as Cow-pea aphids in vetch crops however these have generally been isolated and in low numbers. Other pests have been in low numbers.
• Although there have been reports of net blotch and scald leaf diseases in susceptible barley varieties and septoria leaf in wheat fungicide applications have been effective in controlling these.
• Rhizoctonia root rot damage in barley has been worse than usual.

PASTURES

• Good seasonal conditions have resulted in rapid pasture growth and most pastures now contain good amounts of biomass.
• Livestock are in excellent condition.
• Most paddocks sown for hay have grown well. There are reports of livestock producers from Upper Eyre Peninsula forward-buying hay to replenish depleted supplies.
• Lower Eyre farmers who do not have livestock might take the opportunity to bale straw after harvest to provide livestock feed for producers in other parts of Eyre Peninsula.
Eastern Eyre Peninsula

WEATHER

- July and August rainfall were below average across the district with the northern part of the district receiving very much below average rainfall.
- Mean maximum temperatures for July were above to very much above average. Mean minimum temperatures were above average for July and below to very much below average for August with numerous frosts in mid to late August.
- Strong winds were recorded on several days.

CROPS

- Crops in the northern part of the region around Cootra, Buckleboo and Kimba, and also around Tuckey, Rudall, Cleve, Cowell and Arno Bay have rapidly hayed off during the dry conditions. There is very little moisture remaining in most soil profiles.
- Barley crops have rapidly hayed off with the dry conditions. Many paddocks on the heavier soil types near Kimba, Buckleboo, Waddikee and Darke Peak will only yield enough to provide seed for next year’s crop.
- In areas of reasonable crop growth including Lock, Murdinga, Wharminda, Port Neill and the Cleve Hills near Campoon and Mangalo, good spring rains will be required for crops to realise potential yields.
- Crop condition varies greatly depending on time of sowing and patchiness of rainfall. Most crops are at flowering to early grain fill. Pulses appear to be less affected by the dry conditions than cereal crops.
- Sandy paddocks that were exposed and vulnerable to erosion in 2018 have generally covered well this season and have enough surface cover for erosion protection.
- The exception to this is on isolated water repellent sandy rises and some paddocks in the Franklin Harbour and Arno Bay districts that did not receive sufficient early rains for good crop establishment.
- Frost damage has occurred, particularly in barley crops in the Lock, Tuckey, Darke Peake and Mangalo areas. Those with sufficient biomass have been cut for hay.
- Insect pest levels have generally been low with only isolated reports of aphids in medic and vetch pastures.
- There has been a higher incidence of rhizoctonia root rot in crops this season compared to normal. This may be due to grasses left in pastures during recent dry seasons.

PASTURES

- Dry conditions have resulted in rapid drying of pastures with low amounts of paddock biomass in many districts.
- Farmers have opted not to spray out grasses in pastures so much this year to maintain surface cover for as long as possible. Paddocks will instead be spray-topped or grasses removed in early spring to prevent grass weeds from setting seed.
- Some farmers have already begun supplementary-feeding stock with hay and grain in pasture paddocks.
- Livestock are generally in excellent condition. Most producers have already reduced stock numbers to core breeders and plan to wean and sell lambs early to reduce pressure on feed supplies.
- Some farmers near Kimba have already turned livestock onto failed crops. However, farmers in other districts are cautious because of poor surface cover and the risk of exposing vulnerable soils to wind erosion.
Upper North

WEATHER

- July rainfall was very much below average in the northwest and below average in the remainder of the district. Rainfall in August was average in the south and below average in the rest of the district.
- Growing season rainfall to the end of August ranged from very much below average in the north to below average in the south.
- Mean maximum temperatures for July were above average in the south and very much above average further north. Mean maximum temperatures in August were average.
- Mean minimum temperatures were above average for July and very much below average for August with numerous frosts in mid to late August.

CROPS

- Crop growth is highly variable with crops in the northern part of the district having grown slowly due to severe moisture stress with well below average yield potential. Crops in the south and west of the district have reasonable growth with below to slightly below average yield potential.
- Wheat crop growth varies from grain filling in the Mambray Creek area to stem elongation stage east of Jamestown.
- Soil moisture levels are very low across the district.
- The flag leaf of cereal crops has begun to die on heavier soils and flats in the northern part of the district and many of these areas will not be harvested. Some farmers have already turned stock onto these poor crops.
- Crops on lighter soils and along the hills where there has been more rain still have reasonable yield potential although most will be below average.
- Pulse crops are flowering and early pea crops have started to pod.
- A narrow strip of hail in the Crystal Brook area in mid-August caused damage to some wheat and canola crops.
- Several severe frosts in late August caused stem frost to some crops but the extent and severity of the damage has not yet been assessed.
- Septoria tritici leaf disease is present in most wheat crops and some farmers have applied fungicides depending on the growth stage and yield potential of crops. There have been low levels of powdery mildew in some wheat crops.
- Lucerne flea was reported in high numbers in several cereal crops during August causing significant leaf damage.
- There are low levels of disease in most lentil crops. Ascochyta blight leaf disease is present in chickpea crops and protective fungicides have been applied to slow spread of the disease.
- Pulse crops are being monitored for insects but only low numbers are being detected at present.

PASTURES

- Regenerating pastures are relatively thin with low amounts of biomass.
- Sown pastures have made reasonable growth and are providing some feed for livestock.
- Vetch pastures have grown slowly but should provide some valuable feed for livestock.
- Farmers in the northern part of the district have begun spray-topping or hay-freezing pastures to control grass seed set.
Mid North

WEATHER

- July and August rainfall were below average across most of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average in the west, to very much above average in the east for July and average for August. Minimum temperatures for July were above to very much above average and below to very much below average in August.
- Several severe frosts were recorded in mid to late August.

CROPS

- Wheat crops vary between early head emergence stage in the west, to early stem elongation stage in the east of the district.
- Barley crops range in growth stage from booting to head emergence with grazed crops being later maturing.
- Canola crops are at mid to full flower, early pea crops are starting to pod with most at full flower and bean crops are flowering but have not yet started to pod. Other pulse crops have started to flower.
- Barley crops have high yield potential but will need average spring rainfall to achieve this potential.
- Soil moisture levels are low and declining in the west but being maintained in the east of the district.
- There are low levels of net form of net blotch in barley crops.
- Septoria tritici is present in most susceptible wheat varieties with many crops being sprayed to reduce damage.
- There are low levels of Ascochyta in bean and chickpea crops, managed with protective fungicides.
- There have been reports of stem frost in cereal crops in low-lying areas from Saddleworth through to Spalding but the severity and extent of damage has not yet become evident.
- More cereal crops than normal were showing signs of nitrogen deficiency in early August due to the lower rates applied and a limited supply of urea. Additional nitrogen was applied to many crops in early August.
- Lucerne flea caused severe damage to a number of wheat crops during August and treated with insecticide.
- Cutworm and armyworm have caused damage to isolated areas in some cereal crops.
- Hay crops have grown well and have slightly below average yield potential.

PASTURES

- Regenerating pastures grew slowly providing limited grazing.
- Sown pastures have grown well and have provided a good quantity of quality pasture feed.
- Many farmers sowed vetch for hay but most crops are unlikely to produce enough growth to cut for hay.
- Farmers with livestock will cut either paddocks sown for hay or crops to replenish hay supplies.
- Most producers are reporting slightly lower lambing percentages 5 to 10% lower than average.
Lower North

WEATHER

- July rainfall was below average and August rainfall was average to below average.
- Mean maximum temperatures were very much above average for July and average for August.
- Mean minimum temperatures were very much above average for July and below average for August.

CROPS

- Crops have grown rapidly despite below average July-August rainfall and yield potential is likely to be close to average across the district given a reasonable spring.
- Wheat crops vary from head emergence in the west to booting stage in the east of the district. Barley crops are at grain fill to early head emergence stages.
- The area sown to canola has been significantly reduced, but crops have grown well and are at mid-flowering with average yield potential.
- Lentil crops are at canopy closure stage and beginning to flower.
- Early-sown bean crops in the higher rainfall parts of the district have grown well but those in the lower rainfall areas have poorer potential.
- Soil moisture reserves across the district are very low with heavy crop canopies very rapidly using up any remaining moisture.
- Several frosts were reported across parts of the district in late August. Crops will need assessment in the coming weeks for stem frost damage. Most crops have high amounts of biomass and even if frosted would produce high quantities of good quality hay.
- The area sown to hay crops has increased and have grown well with average hay yields likely even without further significant rainfall.
- Septoria tritici has been present in most wheat crops with most crops sprayed at least once and many sprayed twice to control the spread of the disease.
- There have been low levels of net form of net blotch in barley crops; many crops have been sprayed.
- Pea crops have grown well and are flowering with low levels of disease.
- Bean crops have low levels of disease and most farmers have applied less fungicide than normal due to the dry conditions.
- Chickpeas crops have high levels of ascochyta blight which has required regular fungicide application.

PASTURES

- Regenerating pastures have grown well but most have been heavily grazed and only contain low amounts of biomass.
- Lucerne flea and red-legged earth mite numbers have increased causing damage to pastures.
- Most producers have reduced their livestock numbers.
Yorke Peninsula

WEATHER

- July rainfall varied from average to very much below average across the district. Rainfall for August was below average in most of the district.
- Growing season rainfall has varied from very much below average around Kadina to above average at Yorketown.
- Mean maximum temperatures for July were above to very much above average. Minimum temperatures were above average to very much above average for July and below average to very much below average for August with several frosts in the northern part of the district in late August.

CROPS

- Crops are in good condition throughout the middle of Yorke Peninsula from north to south despite below average rainfall in July and August.
- Coastal areas suffered moisture stress during mid to late August and consequently cereal crops have started booting to head emergence early, reducing their yield potential.
- Southern Yorke Peninsula has had excellent growing conditions for most of the season and crop potential is average to above average. The northern half of the district is highly variable with poor to good crop condition depending on soil depth.
- Coastal areas and shallow stony soils are showing visual moisture stress symptoms, particularly around Kadina.
- Early-sown wheat crops are at flowering to grain fill with most crops at flag leaf to early head emergence stage.
- Canola crops are at full flower with average yield potential. Late upper canopy blackleg infection may reduce some yield potential.
- Most barley crops are at the flag leaf stage with some heads emerged. Barley crops appear to have been less affected by the dry conditions than wheat.
- Septoria tritici is present in most wheat crops and farmers have applied protective fungicides. In crops where applications were applied late some minor yield loss has already occurred.
- Net form of net blotch has appeared in some susceptible barley varieties, particularly near Minlaton. Leaf rust has been at low levels. Preventative fungicides have been applied to higher-risk crops.
- Early-sown lentil crops reached canopy closure in late August and most varieties have started flowering. Disease levels are currently low in lentil crops. Coastal and northern crops are suffering from moisture stress lowering their yield potential, extremely unlikely to reach canopy closure.
- Ascochyta blight is present in chickpea crops and preventative fungicides are being applied prior to rain to reduce infection. At this stage yield is unlikely to have been severely affected.
- Some nitrogen fertiliser application has been late due to the dry conditions and uncertain yield.
- Frosts in late August have damaged vegetative growth in pulse crops with only minimal yield impact. There has been some frost damage to cereal crops but the extent and severity is still being assessed.
- Oaten hay crops are extremely variable with short and thin crops along coastal areas but crops that have not suffered moisture stress have excellent growth.

PASTURES

- Most pastures have poor quantities of feed as growth was slow in July and August. Pastures on Southern Yorke Peninsula have excellent amounts of feed.
- There will be limited medic and vetch pastures cut for hay as grazing has reduced production.
- Lambing percentages were below average and most producers will further reduce stock numbers.
Adelaide Hills Fleurieu Peninsula & Kangaroo Island

WEATHER

- July rainfall was average to very much below average across the district. Rainfall for August was average across the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were very much above average for July and average for August.
- Mean minimum temperatures were above average to very much above average for July and average to below average for August.

CROPS

Central Hills/Fleurieu

- Most cereal crops are at late tillering stage and canola is in full flower.
- Soil moisture reserves are well below average and soils are drying out rapidly.
- Crop growth is ahead of normal and crops will move into reproductive growth stages quickly unless rain occurs soon. Yields are likely to be below average.
- Some poor crops may be grazed, finishing spring lambs rather than harvested for grain.
- Nitrogen fertiliser has been applied on early-sown crops. Later-sown crops have had no additional nitrogen applied due to their low yield potential.
- Crop disease levels are low due to dry conditions requiring limited fungicide applications. Insect and pest levels are below average.
- The area of crop cut for hay will depend on the timing and amount of spring rainfall. The dry weather has significantly reduced the amount of silage produced and without further spring rains hay cuts will be well below average.

Kangaroo Island

- Canola crops are at early flowering and likely to yield above average due to the lack of waterlogging.
- Cereal crops are at flag leaf stage with average yield potential and bean crops are flowering and likely to yield well below average (up to 50% below average).
- Stored soil moisture levels are well below average (about 50%)
- Nitrogen fertiliser has been applied at average application rates.
- Crop disease levels are low apart from some incidences of blackleg in canola.

PASTURES

Central Hills/Fleurieu

- Growth and feed availability of regenerating and sown pastures is well below average.
- Livestock condition is average to slightly below.
- Lambing/calving percentages have been average but many producers are struggling to finish lambs.
- Feed availability in spring/summer is likely to be below average without above average spring rains.

Kangaroo Island

- Growth and feed availability in regenerating pastures is average to above average due to the mild winter weather conditions but lack of sub soil moisture could result in below average growth in spring.
- Growth of sown hay mixes is currently average but without substantial further rains yield will decline to below average due to low soil moisture levels.
- Livestock are in good condition with average lambing/calving percentages.
- Lack of run-off into dams for the eastern portion of Kangaroo Island (approx. 25% of farming properties) may require livestock to be confinement fed if stock water in paddocks runs out.
Lower Murray

WEATHER

- Rainfall was below average for July and average to below average for August.
- Growing season rainfall has varied from 168mm (below average) at Murray Bridge to 72mm (very much below average) at Sedan.
- Mean maximum temperatures were very much above average for July and average for August. Mean minimum temperatures for July were very much above average with the southern part recording highest on record temperatures. Minimum temperatures for August were average to below average.
- Moderate to strong winds occurred throughout July and August.

CROPS

- Some farmers in the northern area of the district are dealing with the second year of very dry conditions and have had trouble establishing crops.
- Areas of erosion are persisting as crops have failed to establish well in some areas for a second year of dry conditions and strong winds.
- Crop establishment is patchy particularly in the northern part of the district due to the lack of rainfall and heavier soil types.
- Most crops are behind their normal growth stage for this time of year and with little stored soil moisture have low yield potential.
- Crops in the southern part of the district have grown well but yield potential is still below average.
- Pests and disease levels have been at low levels.
- Farmers in the south of the district have applied usual quantities of fertiliser and pesticides but those in the north have drastically reduced inputs due to low yield potential.

PASTURES

- Pastures in the north have some growth but most are being grazed with insufficient moisture to increase biomass.
- Pastures in the southern parts of the district have more growth and sown cereal pastures have reasonable growth and most will provide good quantities of biomass. Vetch pastures have grown poorly will minimal biomass.
- Livestock are in reasonable condition but some farmers in the drier parts of the region have already decided to reduce numbers or destock as a result of their second dry season in a row.
- Most lambs are being sold early as stores.
- Irrigated river flats sown to winter pasture mixes have average pasture growth and are starting to provide good amounts of feed.
Northern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- July rainfall was below average in the northeast and average in the remainder of the district. August rainfall was below average to very much below average across the district.
- Growing season rainfall has been very much below average to the end of August.
- Mean maximum temperatures were very much above average for July and average for August. Mean minimum temperatures were very much above average for July and below to very much below average for August with numerous frosts.
- Moderate to strong winds occurred on numerous days raising dust.

CROPS

- Crops across the district are beginning to show signs of severe moisture stress and without substantial rainfall in the first two weeks of September will suffer a significant decline in yield potential.
- While most crops established well after adequate May-June rainfall, most were sown later than ideal and with no subsoil moisture. This has left them extremely vulnerable to any dry periods through spring.
- Crops on heavier soil types shallow stony soils and deep sandy areas have stopped growing with tillers beginning to die.
- Barley crops are at booting stage with some at early head emergence. Wheat crops are generally at stem elongation stage.
- The few canola crops that have been planted this year are short and thin and well into flowering with very poor yield potential.
- Pulse crops have generally struggled to produce any bulk in the northern part of the district and are not expected to be profitable without substantial rainfall in early September.
- There are no major insect or disease concerns in crops with moisture being the key limiting factor.
- There have only been very limited nitrogen applications to crops in the southern part of the district.
- Many sandy rises have minimal cover and are extremely vulnerable to wind erosion due to grazing pressures and the lack of vegetative cover from the previous two below average seasons.

PASTURES

- Many farmers have reduced stock numbers in preparation for another summer with little dry feed.
- Most farmers have continued to feed hay and grain to stock and will do so through the coming months although the cost of this is having a significant effect on profitability.
- It is likely that many failed crops will be used for grazing over the coming months; however, this presents a significant threat of erosion on sandy rises.
- Early-sown pasture feed paddocks have been grazed by livestock providing valuable fodder through the winter period.
- Some confinement feeding is taking place by farmers who have suitable infrastructure and more farmers will need to do this in the coming months.
- Farmers have begun spray-topping barley grass pastures but many are concerned that this will increase the palatability of pastures leading to over-grazing particularly on sandy soils.
- Livestock have been maintained in reasonable condition and lambing percentages have been average to slightly below average this season.
Southern Murray Mallee

WEATHER

- Rainfall for July was average across most of the district. August rainfall was average in the west and below average in the east.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average for July and average for August.
- Mean minimum temperatures for August were very much above average with the western part of the district recording the highest minimum temperatures on record. Minimum temperatures for August were average to below average.
- Moderate to strong winds occurred on numerous days raising dust.

CROPS

- Crops have grown well and most have average to slightly below average yield potential.
- Most cereal crops are at early head emergence and pulse crops are flowering.
- Early-sown crops supplied with enough nitrogen and application of fungicides for disease control have above average yield potential.
- Hay yields are likely to be average to above average.
- Crops planted later into June have grown well but will need average to above average spring conditions to achieve their potential.
- Despite close to average rainfall stored soil moisture levels remain relatively low due to the dry profile at the beginning of the season.
- Cool damp conditions have been conducive for the development of foliar diseases with higher amounts of fungicide being applied to crops. There have been high levels of scald in barley and red leather leaf in oat crops.
- Most areas of crop that were damaged by strong winds early in the season have now recovered and have adequate cover.
- The area sown to pulse and canola crops has been significantly reduced but most of these crops have grown well with average to above average yield potential.
- Pests have been at very low levels in all crops.
- Several frosts were recorded in late August however the extent of crop damage has not yet been determined.

PASTURES

- Pastures have grown well providing adequate feed for livestock.
- Sown cereals and vetch pastures have grown rapidly providing good levels of high-quality feed.
- Most lambs have been weaned with adequate quality pasture to finish them to trade weights.
- Hay and grain reserves are low on most properties however farmers are planning to replenish supplies in the coming months.
Upper South East

WEATHER

- July rainfall was below average along the coast and average further inland. Rainfall for August was average throughout most of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average to very much above average for July and below average for August.
- Mean minimum temperatures were very much above average for July with the North West part of the district recording the highest minimum temperatures on record.

CROPS

- Soil moisture is moderate in most of the district with good spring rainfall required for crops to achieve their potential yields.
- Most crops have average yield potential.
- Canola crops are at 5% flowering; beans are at canopy closure stage and starting to flower.
- Pre-canopy closure fungicides are being applied to bean crops.
- Early-maturing wheat varieties are at flag leaf stage with other varieties at stem elongation to booting stage.
- Nitrogen is being applied to target average yields.
- An earlier urea shortage has resulted in less fertiliser applications.
- Overall disease levels are normal including blackleg in canola chocolate spot in beans scald and net blotch in barley. Septoria has been higher than normal in early maturing wheat varieties.
- Aphid levels are lower than normal.

PASTURES

- Pasture growth has been good in August with some warmer temperatures.
- Many producers are at maximum stocking capacity, a result of high returns from livestock with minimal surplus pasture.
- Producers have run stock on cereal crops during early growth stages to meet winter feed demands.
- Many lucerne stands have been over-sown with cereals to grow more feed.
- Gibberellic acid and higher amounts of nitrogen have been applied to increase pasture growth.
- Supplementary feeding continued into August particularly of lactating cows and ewes and weaned lambs.
- Livestock condition is average to good.
- Lambing percentages have been variable with some producers reporting 20-25% less lambs than normal. In many circumstances, this has been due to lack of sufficient feed.
Lower South East

WEATHER

- July rainfall was below average to very much below average.
- August rainfall varied from below average in the northwest corner, to above average in the southern part of the district.
- Mean maximum temperatures were above average to very much above average for July and below average for August.
- Mean minimum temperatures were very much above average for July and average for August.

CROPS

- Barley and wheat crops are between early tillering and booting growth stages with growth being slower than normal.
- Beans are at the pre-flowering stage or early flowering depending on when they were sown.
- Fungicides are being applied to bean crops before canopy closure is complete.
- Earlier maturing canola varieties are starting to flower but long season varieties are still at the pre-flowering stage.
- Soil moisture is good and most soil profiles are full.
- Yield potential is currently average to above average and with good spring rainfall yield potential will increase.
- With no or little waterlogging crops are actively growing with less disease.
- Slugs have been reported damaging isolated cereal crops with 25% of some paddocks being affected and minor damage to bean crops. Heavy stubble residues from last year could have enabled slugs to survive despite the dry summer.
- Other pest and insects are generally at low levels.
- Septoria has been present in wheat crops but is at normal to low levels; managed with fungicides.
- Nitrogen is being applied to target average to above average yields.
- Foliar trace elements are being applied to crops through boom sprays.

PASTURES

- Pasture growth has been average to above average with less waterlogging than normal. However, pasture availability is variable depending on stocking density.
- There has been an increased use of nitrogen fertilisers and pasture growth products (gibberellic acid) to boost pasture production. This is being driven by a combination of factors including high livestock returns awareness and education of these products and a lack of hay reserves.
- Red-legged earth mite has been present but is at normal levels and is being controlled.
- Hay stocks are depleted.
- Supplementary feeding has ceased on most properties although some cattle are still being supplementary-fed hay.
- Livestock are in good condition.
- Lambing percentages have been variable with some producers reporting 15% less lambs.
- Cattle lice infestations have been significantly higher than normal.
Pastoral Areas

- July rainfall was generally below average to very much below average with a few pockets of average rainfall mainly in the North West Pastoral Zone.
- A number of small areas received their lowest July rainfall on record.
- August rainfall was below to very much below average across most of the pastoral region with several areas receiving their lowest August rainfall on record.
- Conditions remain dry in most pastoral areas with very low amounts of quality forage available.
- Most cattle and sheep producers have reduced livestock numbers, with some properties totally destocking and others continuing to reduce numbers.
- Many areas have had their longest period of non-useful rain (less than 5 mm) since the early 1950s.
- Pastoralists are not expecting drought-breaking rains now until monsoonal conditions develop in northern Australia.
- Some properties have placed stock on agistment in other areas. However there is very limited agistment available making it difficult to find and expensive.
- Many producers are concerned about how they will recover when it does rain so have retained as many breeding stock as possible either by buying fodder or putting stock on agistment.
- Pastoralists have continued to sell stock to both reduce stocking rates and generate cash-flow.