

Crop Conditions as of May 21, 2009

The recent cool weather conditions, including snow and frost, have hindered seeding operations in the province. Despite the adverse weather, producers have made good progress in seeding, which stands at 67 per cent complete. This compares to 13 per cent two weeks ago, and 80 per cent at this time in most years. About 10 per cent of the 2009 crops have emerged, with some frost damage reported across the province. Most crops may recover from the frost, but some re-seeding is expected. Compared to the 10-year average, crop development this year is about 1-2 weeks behind, and pasture and tame hay growth is about 2-3 weeks behind. The crop development of fall-seeded cereals is also slow, with light to moderate winter kill reported in some areas. Table 1 below provides estimates of 2009 seeding progress to date in Alberta, for major crops by region.

Due to the lack of precipitation, dry conditions remain a major concern to many producers, particularly in the North East Region, and eastern parts of the Central Region. Overall, surface moisture is rated as 17 per cent poor, 26 per cent fair, 31 per cent good, 24 per cent excellent, and two per cent excessive, while sub-surface moisture is reported as 25 per cent poor, 35 per cent fair, 30 per cent good, nine per cent excellent, and one per cent excessive.

Pasture and tame hay growth has been slow this spring, the result of cool temperatures and the lack of moisture. In many areas, pasture growth is significantly delayed and is not ready for grazing. Many producers are still feeding their cattle with hay, straw and feed grains. For producers running short of the feed grains/forages supply, they are being forced to let cattle graze pasture, due to limited alternatives. Provincially, pasture conditions are rated as 39 per cent poor, 36 per cent fair, 23 per cent good, and two per cent excellent. The rating of tame hay growth is 35 per cent poor, 35 per cent fair, 27 per cent good, and three per cent excellent. Producers are also concerned with the low water reserves in dugouts.

Spraying for post-emergence weed control has just begun, primarily on fall-seeded crops in the Southern Region. There is a concern about the potential infestation of flea beetles. Additionally, some areas have reported moderate soil erosion from winds and spring run-off.

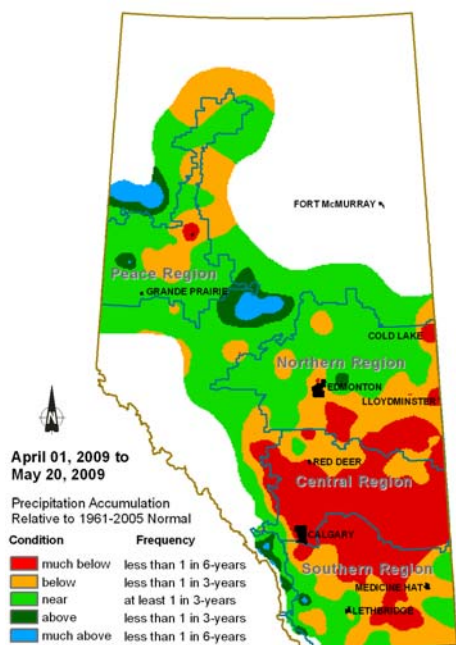


Table 1: Alberta Crop Seeding Progress, As of May 21, 2009

	South	Central	N. East	N. West	Peace	Alberta
Spring Wheat	75%	80%	77%	84%	72%	77%
Durum Wheat	85%	78%	77%	84%	72%	84%
Oats	56%	53%	30%	46%	5%	36%
Barley	71%	64%	37%	52%	9%	56%
Canola	78%	75%	75%	81%	44%	69%
Dry Peas	95%	90%	95%	98%	76%	92%
All Crops	76%	72%	65%	69%	46%	67%

Source: Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development

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REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS:

The 2009 Alberta Crop Report Series continues to provide summaries for the following five regions:

Region One: Southern (Strathmore, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Foremost)

- Rain showers, along with frost and snow received in some areas, have hindered crop seeding during the last two weeks. Overall, seeding is estimated at 76 per cent complete. The southwestern parts of the region lag behind, with less than 50 per cent done, due to excessive moisture. Re-seeding has occurred in some areas, mainly the result of damage by frost, wind erosion, and winter kill in fall-seeded cereals. The early seeded crops have emerged or are emerging. The cool weather conditions in spring have resulted in crop development being 10-15 days behind normal, and hay/pasture growth 15-20 days behind most years.
- For specialty crops, estimates of seeding completion are 99 per cent for sugar beets, 90 per cent for chick peas and potatoes, 80 per cent for mustard seeds, and 50 per cent for dry beans.
- Moisture reserves at the surface level remain favorable, while the lack of sub-surface moisture is reported in some areas. Pasture is rated as seven per cent poor, 35 per cent fair, and 58 per cent good/excellent.

Region Two: Central (Rimbey, Airdrie, Coronation, Oyen)

- Due to the limited precipitation received during the last two weeks, dry condition is a major concern, particularly in the eastern half of the region. Overall, surface moisture is rated as 24 per cent poor, 36 per cent fair, 37 per cent good, and three per cent excellent, with a slightly lower rating reported for sub-surface moisture.
- Seeding is estimated at 72 per cent complete, and less than 10 per cent of the crops have emerged. Temperatures were below zero for a few nights, with heavy frost reported in many areas. Producers are concerned about the damage caused by frost to emerged crops, which may result in some re-seeding. There are also reports of some winter kill in fall-seeded crops.
- Due to cool, dry conditions, nearly 50 per cent of pasture and tame hay is in poor condition.

Region Three: North East (Smoky Lake, Vermilion, Camrose, Provost)

- The lack of precipitation during the last two weeks has resulted in some deterioration in moisture conditions for most areas of the region. The exceptions are areas of Lamont, Smoky Lake and Lac La Biche, where surface moisture is generally adequate. Overall, surface moisture is rated as 29 per cent poor, 46 per cent fair, 17 per cent good, and eight per cent excellent, with a lower rating reported for sub-surface moisture.
- Seeding in the region is about 65 per cent complete. Crop emergence and growth have been slow, due to cool temperatures. Frost has occurred and its impact on emerged crops is a major concern.
- Pasture growth is rated as 77 per cent poor, 22 per cent fair, and one per cent good, with a similar rating reported for tame hay.

Region Four: North West (Barrhead, Edmonton, Leduc, Drayton Valley, Athabasca)

- Weather conditions during the last two weeks have been mainly cool and damp, with snow reported across the region. Overall, seeding is estimated at 69 per cent complete, and less than 10 per cent of the crops have emerged. Frost has caused some damage to emerged crops.
- Dry conditions are a concern in some areas. Overall, surface moisture is rated as 27 per cent poor, 28 per cent fair, 21 per cent good, 20 per cent excellent, and four per cent excessive.
- Pasture and tame hay growth has been slow, and is reported as 36 per cent poor, 40 per cent fair, 21 per cent good, and three per cent excellent.

Region Five: Peace River (Fairview, Falher, Grande Prairie, Valleyview)

- The recent adverse weather conditions, including snow and frost, have resulted in some delays in crop seeding and emergence. Overall, seeding operation stands at 46 per cent complete, and less than five per cent of the crops have emerged. Heavy frost has occurred, and its impact on emerged crops and germinated seeds is a major concern. Some fields are expected to be re-seeded.
- Snow and rain have brought some moisture across the region. Surface moisture reserves remain favorable, while the lack of sub-surface moisture is reported in many areas.
- Pasture is rated as 24 per cent poor, 45 per cent fair, and 31 per cent good. The rating of tame hay growth is 16 per cent poor, 42 per cent fair, and 42 per cent good.

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