

# Iowa Crops & Weather



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## MILD WEATHER GOOD FOR LIVESTOCK

Iowa livestock producers had a great month for calving due to March's mild temperatures and relatively dry conditions. Soil moisture levels also improved during March after snow fell on the fourth of the month, frost melted, and small, scattered rain showers fell toward the end of the month. Forty-two percent of the state's soils had adequate moisture supplies, compared to 37 percent during the month of February. Oat seeding has begun and scattered reports of tillage and spring application of ammonia were received.

At the end of March, on average, there was no remaining snow cover across Iowa, compared to 1 inch last month and no snow cover last year at this time. The average depth of frost penetration for the state was 4 inches, compared to 17 inches last month and 1 inch at the same time last year. Soil moisture availability rated 13 percent very short, 44 percent short, 42 percent adequate, and 1 percent surplus. Warmer temperatures reportedly caused quality concerns in some farm-stored grain. As a result, grain movement increased during March. Movement of grain for the state was reported at 16 percent none, 37 percent light, 40 percent moderate, and 7 percent heavy.

Availability of hay and roughage supplies was 5 percent short, 80 percent adequate, and 15 percent surplus. Quality of hay and roughage supplies was 9 percent poor, 40 percent fair, and 51 percent good. Utilization of stubble fields for grazing rated 37 percent none, 26 percent limited, 28 percent moderate, and 9 percent extensive. All three of these items were similar in condition compared to last month.

Hog and pig losses in March were 18 percent below average, 73 percent average, and 9 percent above average. Cattle and calf losses were 28 percent below average, 70 percent average, and 2 percent above average. These results indicate an improvement in livestock health from last month.

## IOWA PRELIMINARY MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – MARCH

**General Summary:** March temperatures averaged 35.5 degrees or 0.5 degrees below normal while precipitation averaged 1.19 inches or 1.00 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 56th warmest (yes that is right - it was warmer than the median but cooler than the mean) and 33rd driest March among 131 years of state records.

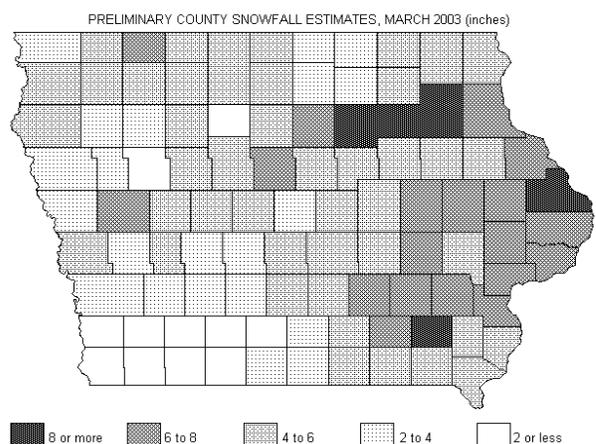
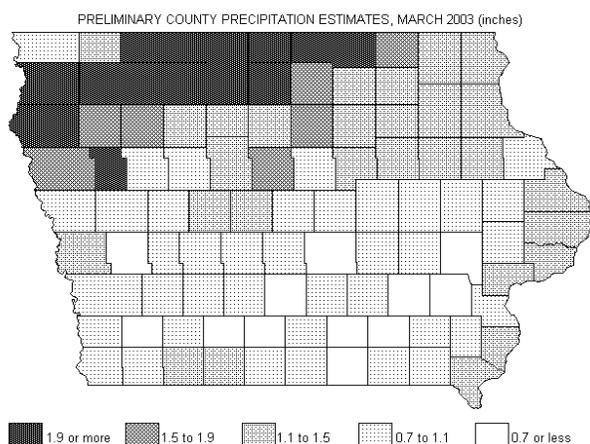
**Temperatures:** March began very cold with below normal temperatures experienced over the first 11 days of the month. Spencer reported the lowest Iowa temperature of the winter with a -21 degree reading on the morning of the 5th. However, daily

temperatures averaged above normal on every day from the 12th through the 27th, nearly canceling the effect of the early month cold. Temperatures soared to 81 degrees on the 15th at Clarinda and again at Glenwood on the 16th. Below normal temperatures briefly returned for the 28th-30th with a 15 degree reading at Atlantic on the morning of the 30th. Finally, unseasonable heat returned quickly on the 31st with another 81 degree temperature at Glenwood and Sioux City.

**Heating Degree Days:** Home heating requirements, as estimated by cooling degree day totals, averaged 1 percent greater than normal and 14 percent less than last March. Heating requirements for the entire 2002-2003 season (since July 1, 2002) are running exactly the same as normal but have been 17 percent greater than last season.

**Precipitation:** Snow fell statewide on March 4 with amounts exceeding one foot in a narrow band extending from southeast Franklin County to northern Clayton County. Snowfall amounts of 5 to 7 inches were also common across much of the southeastern one-third of Iowa with this storm. Rain fell statewide on the 20th with amounts averaging around one-third of an inch. Finally, the largest precipitation event of the month came on the 27th-28th with a statewide average of about one-half inch. Rainfall exceeded an inch at a few northwest Iowa locations with this last storm while less than a tenth of an inch was reported at some southeast Iowa sites. For the month as a whole, preliminary precipitation totals across the state vary from only 0.47 inches at Newton up to 2.65 inches at Swea City.

**Drought Update:** The past November to March period has been the second driest five-month period on record in Iowa. Precipitation over these past 5 months has amounted to only 2.90 inches (normal is 7.49) while only Nov. 1955 to Mar. 1956 was drier at 2.70 inches. South Central and Southeast Iowa are currently classified as being in severe drought by the Palmer Drought Severity Index while Southwest Iowa is in moderate drought. Streamflow across most of Iowa is running less than half of usual while soil moisture is estimated to be four inches or more below normal across the southeast half of Iowa. Nevertheless, normal rainfall in April and May will be sufficient to lift soil moisture levels back up to seasonal averages. However, it will take a much longer period of adequate rainfall to raise groundwater levels (shallow wells) back to normal in southern Iowa. Despite the recent dryness, typical rainfall is anticipated for the remainder of the spring. There is still time to get soil moisture levels back to normal although our window of opportunity is shrinking with each passing dry day. While the High Plains and the East Coast have seen substantial improvement in their moisture situation, nearly all of the corn belt has been unusually dry since September. Finally, there are some indications that La Niña may return by the end of the year. If La Niña does materialize that could be bad news for Iowa moisture levels in 2004.



### Snow Cover and Frost Penetration for the month of March

Item	Districts									State	Last Month	Last Year
	NW	NC	NE	WC	C	EC	SW	SC	SE			
Snow cover	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Frost penetration	8	8	10	2	2	6	0	0	0	4	17	1

**March Weather Summary For Iowa Agricultural Statistics Service  
Prepared by AWIS, Inc.**

STATION	AIR TEMPERATURE				PRECIPITATION			HDD TOT	HDD DFN	DAYS OF 32 COLD	DAYS OF 28 COLD
	HI	LO	AVG	DFN	TOTAL	DFN	DAYS				
North West District											
Estherville	73	-13	32	3	2.17	0.32	7	1,016	-69	20	18
Sioux Center	76	-13	36	3	2.01	0.09	7	879	-84	21	17
Spencer	74	-14	33	2	2.18	0.28	8	984	-33	21	19
Spirit Lake	72	-8	31	2	1.05	-0.71	5	1,042	168	24	18
North Central District											
Britt	73	-9	30	-4	2.00	0.16	6	1,076	84	25	18
Humboldt	74	-4	32	-3	1.33	-0.70	7	1,022	24	23	17
Mason City	74	-9	32	2	1.77	-0.23	6	1,017	-25	24	18
Northwood	73	-8	30	0	2.11	0.11	9	1,064	-4	24	18
North East District											
Decorah	72	-7	34	1	1.33	-0.56	7	957	-26	21	19
Dubuque	73	-5	34	1	0.84	-2.05	6	952	-17	20	16
Elkader	74	-3	32	-2	1.06	-1.08	8	1,004	190	22	20
Independence	75	-4	32	-2	1.20	-0.82	6	1,022	168	23	19
Waterloo	78	-2	35	2	0.94	-1.36	7	925	-31	21	15
West Central District											
Audubon	76	-8	33	-4	0.40	-1.91	3	969	89	24	23
Carroll	75	-2	34	0	1.07	-1.16	7	947	-6	23	18
Castana	76	-1	35	-2	0.88	-1.25	5	917	-70	19	16
Guthrie Center	78	2	35	-2	0.58	-1.87	5	924	16	22	17
Harlan	77	0	35	-3	0.73	-1.38	8	921	-38	22	16
Jefferson	79	-1	34	0	1.23	-1.00	8	939	-14	20	14
Logan	77	-6	36	0	1.02	-1.02	7	893	-4	23	18
Rockwell City	76	-2	33	-3	0.78	-1.11	7	998	71	24	18
Sioux City	77	-6	37	1	1.63	-0.33	8	873	-34	20	16
Central District											
Ames	76	0	36	3	0.00	-2.16	0	903	-74	21	14
Boone	78	0	34	-1	1.58	-0.73	9	940	16	22	16
Des Moines	77	2	38	0	0.50	-1.83	4	844	-16	19	12
Eldora	76	-3	33	-1	0.89	-1.10	6	985	16	23	14
Marshalltown	75	-3	35	0	0.29	-2.10	4	930	-11	22	14
Newton	75	0	34	-3	0.48	-1.75	6	943	56	20	15
Perry	78	1	34	-1	1.09	-0.92	7	939	-10	22	15
Toledo	75	-3	33	-2	0.61	-1.65	5	986	30	22	15
East Central District											
Cedar Rapids	75	-3	35	-2	0.27	-2.05	8	933	17	22	16
Davenport	74	0	36	-1	1.38	-0.87	10	875	1	20	14
Iowa City	75	0	35	-4	0.41	-1.95	7	908	77	22	17
Lowden	75	-4	33	-3	1.13	-1.41	9	972	64	23	17
Maquoketa	73	-4	32	-3	1.40	-0.88	9	1,002	55	24	18
Muscatine	73	1	36	-4	0.84	-1.87	8	905	-96	20	15
South West District											
Clarinda	81	2	38	2	1.05	-1.40	5	844	-29	22	18
Glenwood	81	5	39	2	1.58	-0.47	8	815	-24	19	15
Oakland	78	3	36	2	1.04	-1.10	9	879	-40	22	17
Red Oak	80	4	38	-2	0.66	-1.60	6	823	19	20	16
Sidney	79	4	39	1	0.25	-2.06	7	805	-23	19	15
South Central District											
Allerton	76	1	37	-1	1.41	-0.90	8	870	-210	21	15
Beaconsfield	77	3	37	-1	1.21	-1.02	5	874	6	19	15
Chariton	77	-3	36	-2	1.11	-1.21	7	899	40	22	19
Indianola	77	-1	36	-2	0.79	-1.40	6	900	40	20	16
Leon	78	-1	37	-1	1.16	-1.14	5	855	-2	21	17
South East District											
Bloomfield	74	3	37	-4	0.87	-1.70	4	869	83	18	16
Burlington	76	3	39	1	1.20	-1.65	8	795	-19	16	13
Ottumwa	77	-1	37	-2	0.30	-1.98	6	853	21	18	14

Precipitation (rain, melted snow or ice) in inches. Precipitation Days = Days with precipitation of 0.01 inch or more. Air Temperatures in Degrees Fahrenheit. Copyright 2003: AWIS, Inc. All Rights Reserved.