



United States Department
of Agriculture

National Agricultural
Statistics Service

Washington Agricultural Statistics Service
P.O. Box 609, Olympia, WA 98507
(360) 902-1940 Fax (360) 902-2091

Washington Crop Weather

Released: January 3, 2006, 1:00 p.m.
Week Ending: January 1, 2006
CWP WA-CW0106

Crop and Weather Information for the Month of December 2005

Western

Grays Harbor: Most ag producers, with the exception of Christmas tree growers, spent the month winterizing and repairing farm machinery. Christmas tree growers embraced nearly ideal harvest conditions the first three weeks of the month as frozen soils and the lack of precipitation greatly facilitated tree harvest. During the final week of the month, unseasonably warm temperatures and heavy rainfall resulted in minor flooding along the Chehalis and Satsop rivers. Greenhouse tomato growers sowed seed at the end of the month for the 2006 crop!

Mason: The beginning of December was dry with freezing temperatures, but no significant precipitation was received. The last half of the month more than made up for the deficit, with 17.5 inches of rain received up until Christmas. Another 3 inches of rain have been received since Christmas. Temperatures have been very mild, in the upper 40's and lower 50's. A fly hatch came on in one of the local barns, requiring fly traps—for the first time in December! Local rivers are on flood watch off and on, particularly the Skokomish.

Pierce: Lots of precipitation was received making the ground very wet.

Pierce/S. King: There were no unusual situations to report and no reports of crop damage due to a weather event.

Snohomish/King: Snow and freezing rain were received early in the month. Cold temperatures were around for the first two weeks and then the weather turned mild and wet. Heavy rains up to 10 inches were received later in the month. Rivers approached flood stage, but no serious flooding occurred. U-Cut Christmas tree farms were busy all month. Standing water remained in many lowland fields.

Thurston: The combination of unseasonably cold temperatures and no rainfall provided nearly ideal harvest conditions for Christmas tree harvest the first three weeks of December. Frozen soils prevented trucks from sinking in the mud and facilitated tree removal from fields. Livestock producers, on the other hand, wound up feeding additional forage due to the cold temperatures and frozen pasture conditions. Warming conditions the end of December, combined with heavy rainfall, resulted in minor flooding along streams including the Black, Chehalis, Deschutes, and Nisqually rivers. No flood damage was reported.

Thurston (2nd Report): Very wet, at last. There were reports that some of the haylage bales were extensively damaged by vole penetration and subsequent rot. Cattle looked good. Weaned calves were off grain, which had been fed twice a day since weaning in September. The cattle will be vaccinated in early January, and calving starts in late March.

Central

Chelan/Douglas: Significant amounts of precipitation were received during the month throughout both counties (rain and snow in the higher elevations). Winter wheat fields were covered with snow. Temperatures fluctuated from very cold (in the teens) to 40 degrees. The cold temperatures should not have affected fruit trees or buds because the decline was gradual.

Franklin: The weather during the month was foggy and wet. Average low temperatures were between 20-23 degrees. There were also several days of single digit temperatures, which should decrease the over wintering of insects.

Franklin (2nd Report): December started with abnormally cool or freezing conditions and moved into a wet climate. Rains consistently fell throughout the latter part of the month which will prove beneficial to dryland wheat, seeded CRP fields and serve as a reserve of sorts before water comes on in the spring on irrigated land. Later month precipitation should make this December one of the wetter months on record for Franklin County and very welcome from the drought months of early 2005. There is little to no fieldwork occurring at this time other than some possible orchard pruning and/or maintenance.

Kittitas: December was exceptionally wet and cold. Precipitation of 2.4 inches was received - nearly double the long-term average of 1.25 inches. Snow depth was considerably better than this time last year, a hopeful sign for irrigators.

Okanogan/Ferry: Orchardists began pruning. Some cattle were still out on lower ranges, while the majority of cattle were on full feed. The lower elevation areas received rain mixed with snow, while the mountain areas received snow.

Yakima: Average temperatures in December varied from 13 degrees below normal to ten degrees above normal, with 2.38 inches of precipitation. No crop damage due to weather conditions was reported.

Eastern

Adams: Winter wheat remained in mostly fair condition as long as seed zone moisture was available at seeding time. Cold, dry conditions persisted most of the month, with warmer conditions and rain falling during the last ten days. Additional precipitation is needed to improve the winter wheat crop conditions.

Adams (2nd Report): December was cold and wet, just not at the same time! Early month temperatures were below freezing for about three weeks. Luckily, there was some cover on most wheat to insulate next year's bounty. A week before Christmas, temperatures began to rise and gentle precipitation fell. There were reports of 1 to 1.5 inches of precipitation in the past ten days, much less than a normal December would bring. Additional precipitation is needed to improve winter wheat crop conditions.

Asotin/Garfield: Snow covered most areas of the two counties in early December. This was followed by well below normal temperatures for nearly two weeks. The weather conditions then turned around and the temperature was above normal for the last week and a half of December. Along with the high temperatures, precipitation in the form of rain was received. The snow is completely gone in all areas except the mountains. Rainfall totals for the month were average in some areas and well below average in other areas. The winter wheat crop is small and vulnerable to winter damage if cold temperatures return.

Garfield: There was a very cold spell in December. Frost was down 3 feet in some places with ice on the surface. There was not much field activity in December. About 50 percent of winter wheat was planted as the cold spell began. Some winter wheat was up before the big cold. There were concerns about winter wheat that did not have snow protection.

Lincoln: The winter wheat crop looked good. Hopefully, it won't come out of dormancy. All of the snow cover was lost on December 20, when it began to rain. The water ran in the winter wheat ground but not in the stubble. The frost depth in the winter wheat thawed to a depth of 20 cm. There is still frost at the 20 to 32 cm level.

Lincoln (2nd Report): Winter wheat remained in mostly good condition throughout the county. Similar to most of eastern Washington, cold dry conditions persisted most of the month. Warmer conditions and rain fell during the last ten days of the month. Additional precipitation is needed to improve the winter wheat conditions.

Pend Oreille: The month of December saw a mixed bag which has become more typical with previous years. Snow early in the month stayed approximately three weeks. Then the week before Christmas, the temperatures warmed up and moisture came in the form of rain. To date, erosion has been limited and most of the moisture went in the profile. Winter wheat is now uncovered, but looks pretty good.

Stevens: Snow melted off, although the ground was still frozen. Pastures were green, but have had no growth. Unusually cold temperatures in the early part of the month froze small streams to the bottom.

Stevens (2nd Report): A cold snap began the latter part of November and continued until December 20. Low temperatures were around zero with high temperatures below freezing during this period. Snow covered winter wheat and alfalfa crops during this time. Temperatures were much warmer during the end of the month with most snow cover melted and rain occurring several days.

Walla Walla: Temperatures late November through mid-December were very cold and dry. Temperatures stayed about 4 to 15 degrees for nearly three weeks. A warming trend around December 22 was followed by rain. Approximately 2 to 3 inches of rainfall was received for December. Rainfall for the Colfax area ended the month of December at 96 percent of normal.

Whitman: The month of December began very winter-like with below freezing temperatures and snow cover for nearly two-thirds of the month. The latter part of the month was punctuated by a thaw with rising temperatures and rainfall. Precipitation for the month was drastically behind normal until the 20th when it began to rain. Rainfall for the Colfax area ended with 96 percent of normal.

National weather website: <http://www.usda.gov/nass/pubs/pubs.htm>

Washington Agricultural Statistics Service website: <http://www.nass.usda.gov/wa>

E-mail: nass-wa@nass.usda.gov

Free e-mail subscriptions are available via automated mailing list for National and State reports. You can subscribe to individual reports and they will be sent directly to your e-mail address soon after the official release time.

Subscribe at: <http://www.nass.usda.gov/sub-form.htm>