

OKLAHOMA CROP WEATHER SUMMARY

2002 CROP WEATHER REVIEW

Robert Harris

January: Mild but unusually dry conditions prevailed across Oklahoma during January. A disastrous ice storm struck the state at the end of January. Hardest hit were western counties and, despite the moisture from ice storms, they still experienced very dry conditions. Wheat conditions declined as a result of the lack of moisture.

February: February continued much the same as January with limited moisture. This further stressed the wheat and pastures. Warm and mild conditions in mid-February allowed producers to begin fertilizing and preparing ground for spring planting. Livestock were rated in mostly fair to good condition. Lack of wheat forage and over grazed native grass pastures caused some producers to sell off cattle.

March: The first half of March continued to be dry. Rains statewide helped improve the wheat conditions but the major wheat areas of the Panhandle, West Central, and North Central districts still only received minimal rain. Wheat in these areas was very stressed. Wheat which was in the jointing stage development was running well behind normal by the end of the month. Hay supplies were being depleted because the lack of rain increased the need for supplemental feeding.

April: Rain finally came in April with measurable precipitation reported across the state each week. This improved wheat development although the Panhandle was still way below normal precipitation. Row crop seedbed preparation got underway as moisture was received. Western Oklahoma peanut producers were planting no-till peanuts due to the lateness of the 2002 Farm Bill peanut program information. Alfalfa and other hay harvest were underway during the last week of the month.

May: Severe thunderstorms with hail, strong winds and some tornadoes crossed the state in early and mid-May. The rain again was very limited in the Panhandle where wheat production prospects continued to dwindle. Wheat harvest was underway by the end of the month in the Southwest district. Producers were busy during the month preparing seedbeds and planting row crops.

June: Average temperatures were prevalent throughout the month. Wheat harvest was interrupted by heavy thunderstorms during the first half of the month but by month's end 95 percent of the crop was harvested which was ahead of normal. Row crop conditions improved due to the warm conditions and adequate soil moisture. Row crop progress was ahead of normal. An increase in lice, flies, and ticks were reported on livestock throughout State.

July: Heavy rain the first week of July was followed with hot, dry conditions for most of the remainder of the month. Temperatures hit the high mark of 108 degrees as far north as Woodward on the 26th. Grasshoppers were becoming troublesome across most of the State. Row crops were in mostly fair to good condition with progress running ahead of normal. Livestock were in mostly good condition.

August: A series of heavy rains in mid-August brought cooler temperatures and provided some relief to crops and pastures. All row crops were rated in mostly fair to good condition. Corn, sorghum, and soybean harvest began in the middle of the month. The rains improved soil moisture supplies just in time to be beneficial for wheat seeding preparations. Pasture and rain conditions were rated in fair to good condition.

September: Rainfall during much of the month improved conditions for row crop development and wheat planting. A fifth cutting of alfalfa had nearly reached the halfway mark by the end of the month. Cotton and peanut harvest began in the southern parts of the State while corn, sorghum, and soybean harvest continued at a steady pace except when fields were too wet.

October: Rains coupled with unseasonably cool temperatures prevailed across Oklahoma during much of October. Wheat seeding and harvesting of summer crops was hindered throughout the month due to the wet fields. The rain was very beneficial to the wheat with over two thirds of the crop in good to excellent condition. Hay and pasture conditions also improved but forage supplies were still scarce in the Panhandle, Southwest, Southeast, and South Central areas due to the drought. As a result, some cattle producers began supplemental feeding.

November: Rains continued during the first week in November but the remainder of the month had only scattered showers. Milder, warmer temperatures allowed fields to dry out so producers could finish seeding their wheat as well as finish row crop harvest. Corn harvest was finished by mid-month while the remaining row crops were running at a close to normal pace. Range and pasture conditions were rated as mostly fair to good.

December: Heavy amounts of precipitation during the beginning and end of December improved soil moisture supplies to mostly adequate to surplus. Wheat condition was rated as fair to excellent going into winter. Wheat pasture grazed reached 48 percent compared to normal of 35 percent. The wet and muddy fields did stress cattle somewhat and hindered feeding operations. Prospects for hay supplies in most of the State were adequate for the remainder of the season.

OKLAHOMA ANNUAL PRECIPITATION, 1920-2002
MEAN PRECIPITATION = 34.39

