

Issue NE-CW0503, released February 3, 2003, by the Nebraska Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA. For more information contact us at: 100 Centennial Mall North, Suite 298, Lincoln, NE 68508, 402-437-5541, e-mail at nass-ne@nass.usda.gov, Internet at <http://www.usda.gov/nass/>.

GENERAL: For the month of January 2003, temperatures were mostly above normals for the third month in a row with minimal moisture received statewide, according to the USDA's Nebraska Agricultural Statistics Service. The western half of the state continued to be rated in extreme drought. Cattle and calves fared well but wheat condition declined from a month ago and is well below last year. Producer activities included planning for the 2003 crop year, FSA sign ups, year-end book work, livestock care, and attending farm sales.

This release is based on reports and data from FSA county directors, county extension educators, NOAA, and the High Plains Climate Center. Current county specific comments plus current and historic PDF files of Weather and Crop reports can be found at: http://www.nass.usda.gov/ne/cropwthr/cmts_cur.htm

WEATHER: The present depth of snow statewide averaged less than an inch with no snow cover reported in the Central and Southeast districts. January weekly temperatures averaged below normals the first week and above normals during the remainder of the month. Highest readings occurred during the second and fourth weeks. Statewide, moisture was minimal and occurred during the last two weeks of January in the form of snow.

CROPS: **Wheat** condition declined again this past month, rated 11 percent very poor, 18 poor, 48 fair, 22 good, and 1 excellent, and remained well below last year's condition of 54 percent good or excellent. **Hay and forage** supplies were mostly adequate to short statewide. The mild weather allowed producers to utilize stalk residue and limit the feeding of hay supplies.

LIVESTOCK: **Cattle and calves** condition rated 4 percent poor, 25 fair, 58 good, and 13 excellent. Calving was underway with no widespread problems reported. Supplemental feeding requirements were below normal as cattle were able to graze stalk fields throughout the month.

The following are comments from Nebraska's FSA County Executive Directors and county Extension Educators:

NORTHWEST

SCOTTSBLUFF/MORRILL: Lack of moisture has growers trying to figure out plans for the coming crop year. Irrigation districts are predicting, at this time, only a 20 day water supply and have not announced when they will deliver the water.

SIOUX : There is still almost no moisture in the soil profile. Livestock are rapidly eating any forage left on the ground.

NORTH CENTRAL

BROWN/ROCK/KEYA PAHA: Mild dry weather has helped stretch winter feed supplies.

HOLT/BOYD: Drought, of course, is still the major concern. Lack of snowfall this winter has reduced the condition of winter wheat.

NORTHEAST

ANTELOPE: Above normal temperatures melted the snow in the fields. Some supplemental feeding is occurring. Problems are occurring in stored grain, with spoilage occurring on the top of the bin. Recent inspection of stored corn has found spoiled grain, growing grain, and mold.

DIXON: Livestock continue to find some roughage in corn stubble. Weather conditions remain relatively dry with seasonal temperatures. Some producers beginning to prepare for early calving. Taxes and program sign up are the focus right now.

CENTRAL

BUFFALO: Producers have been able to utilize the corn fields. Also a lot of corn and soybean stubble was baled for feed.

DAWSON: It is still dry in this area. We have had three snows of one to three inches; however there was little moisture in the snow. Some calves were born in January and seemed pretty normal. The dry weather has had a negative impact on wheat.

EAST CENTRAL

MERRICK: Farmers are concerned about the continuing drought - no moisture in the last snow and all lands are so dry.

NANCE/BOONE: Cattle have fared the winter pretty well so far. Stalks have been utilized very well in the region. Some cows are starting to calve in the area. Producers are working on taxes and government program sign up

POLK/BUTLER: Producers were still in the fields as of mid-January with tillage. Cattle are doing well with the mild weather we have seen the majority of January. Calving has begun in some herds.

SOUTHWEST

CHASE: It is still very dry. We will have some wheat and pastures blow if we get a strong wind.

KEITH/ARTHUR/GARDEN: The mild winter weather has allowed the area cattle producers to use corn stalks and other grazing.

SOUTH CENTRAL

ADAMS: We have received some moisture but not enough to make much of a difference.

PHELPS: Dry conditions persist. Temperatures have been above normal for the most part. Farmers are tending to livestock, doing year end bookkeeping and taking care of Farm Service Agency enrollment requirements for the new farm program.

WEBSTER: Stalk fields have been good but short on feed quality. The drought conditions have really started to effect wheat in the area.

SOUTHEAST

FILLMORE: We did receive some snow through the month. It has since melted but the moisture was welcome.

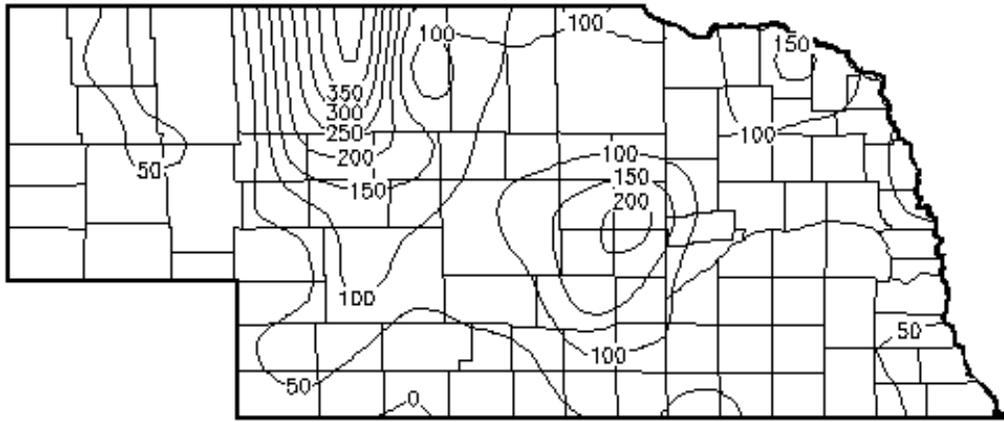
GAGE: Entire county is in need of moisture. Mild weather has been beneficial for calving.

NEMAHA/JOHNSON/PAWNEE: The open winter has been very helpful to cow/calf operators. They have been able to utilize corn/grain sorghum/soybean residue for forage and save their limited hay supplies for use later this spring.

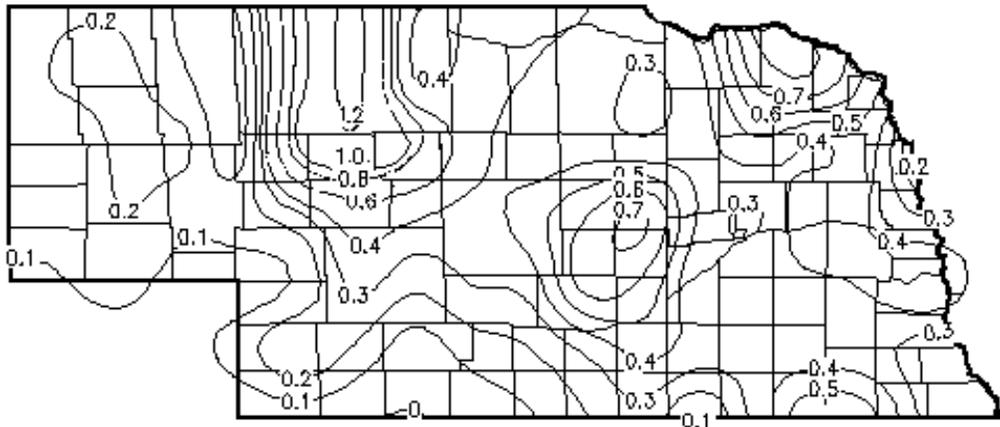
RICHARDSON: Weather conditions continue to be very dry. Ponds are drying up. Farmers are feeding hay and have used the free cattle feed. Calving has started.

SALINE: It is very dry. We have had very little snow this winter.

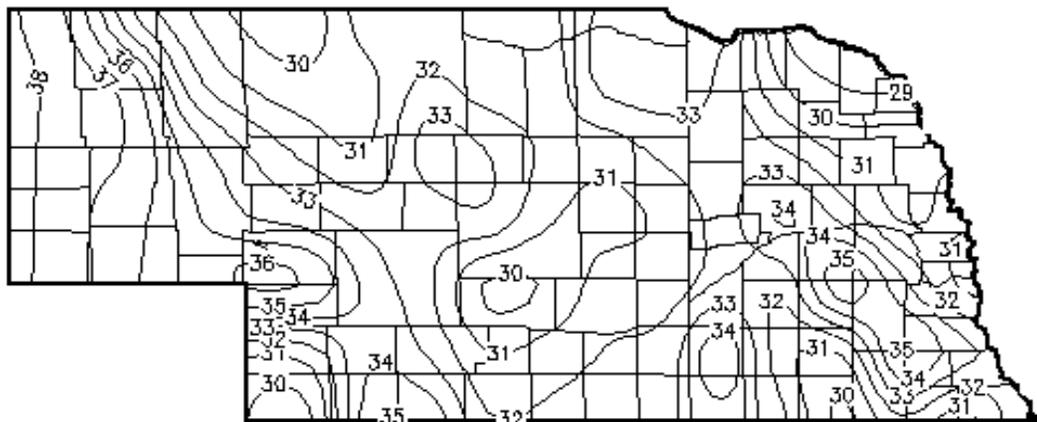
PRECIPITATION AS PERCENT OF NORMAL FOR JANUARY 2003¹



PRECIPITATION IN INCHES FOR MONTH OF JANUARY 2003¹



SEVEN DAY AVERAGE TEMPERATURE AT THE FOUR INCH DEPTH UNDER BARE SOIL¹



¹ Source: High Plains Regional Climate Centers Automated Weather Data Network (AWDN).

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