

Issue NE-CW0904, released March 1, 2004, 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/>.

Agricultural Summary: For the month of February 2004, snow cover and below normal temperatures the first part of the month required producers to supplement feeding of livestock, according to the USDA's Nebraska Agricultural Statistics Service. Beginning mid-month, moisture received from snow melt is a benefit in all aspects but more moisture will be needed for subsoil recharge, surface water holding areas, and spring growth. Moisture remains a concern for producers in the major wheat producing areas. The state continued to be rated in extreme drought in those areas. Producer activities included livestock care, marketing grain, and spring planting preparations.

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 Summary: The end of month snow depth averaged almost 0.40 of an inch statewide. February average temperatures ranged from 14 degrees below normals the first two weeks to 11 degrees above normals the last two weeks.

Field Crops Report: **Wheat** condition rated 9 percent very poor, 18 poor, 37 fair, 34 good, and 2 excellent. This is an improvement over last year's condition of 24 percent good or excellent. **Hay and forage** supplies were mostly adequate statewide. Snow cover during February required producers to provide hay to livestock.

Livestock, Pasture and Range Report: **Cattle and calves** condition rated 1 percent poor, 12 fair, 72 good, and 15 excellent. Calving progressed to 27 percent complete. Snow cover limited grazing potential of stalk fields.

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

NORTHWEST

DAWES: Weather has been good for calving. Hay supplies are in good shape. We will need some moisture at some point.
SCOTTSBLUFF/MORRILL: Normal winter activities.

NORTH CENTRAL

HOLT/BOYD: Moisture is still the critical issue in this area. Heavy spring moisture will be needed to produce a significant hay crop and to bring the pastures and wheat along. We are telling livestock producers to plan to delay going to pasture along with more culling.

NORTHEAST

ANTELOPE: Supplemental feeding occurred due to the snow cover for most of the month. Producers are selling 2003 harvest due to higher prices. Calving has just started, with no unusual problems noted.
CEDAR: Had a lot of snow in February which covered all of the field roughage. Producers are feeding hay to livestock at this time. A few calves are on the ground - most will calf in March/April.
KNOX: Marketing of grain and calves. Tax work. Preparation for spring field work.
THURSTON: We had over 24 inches of snow at one time. However, most operations had plenty of feed on hand.

CENTRAL

DAWSON: The need for moisture is still the major concern. Producers are gearing up for field work and the new calf crop is starting. Some concern about the surface water availability for this season and beyond, if the rain and snowfall does not change.

EAST CENTRAL

DODGE: Mild weather this week melted a lot of snow. Not much ran out of the fields. Producers are getting their seed and fertilizer purchased and getting equipment ready for the field.
DOUGLAS: The big drifts of snow have melted and now spring seems close. Grain is moving to market if you can get to your bins. The mud is making it hard to get around. The grain prices are exciting and questions are coming in on when will I owe my corn counter cyclical payment back.
NANCE/BOONE: Calving season is progressing. Feed supplies are holding strong in the area.
YORK: Almost all of the higher than normal snowfall has melted and a large percent has soaked in. Weather for calving has not been too bad.

SOUTHWEST

CHASE: We are still very dry.
FRONTIER: Calving is in full swing. Forage supplies are good. The snow didn't produce a lot of moisture, but it helped. Most farmers are optimistic about the wheat crop.
HAYES/HITCHCOCK: Wheat in Hayes and Hitchcock counties is in poor condition and needs moisture.

SOUTH CENTRAL

FRANKLIN: Feed supplies and cattle conditions are good.
FURNAS: There was enough snow in February to protect the wheat some.
WEBSTER: The area received about an inch of rain the past weekend. This helps but it is just a drop in the big bucketful we need to replenish subsoil moisture.

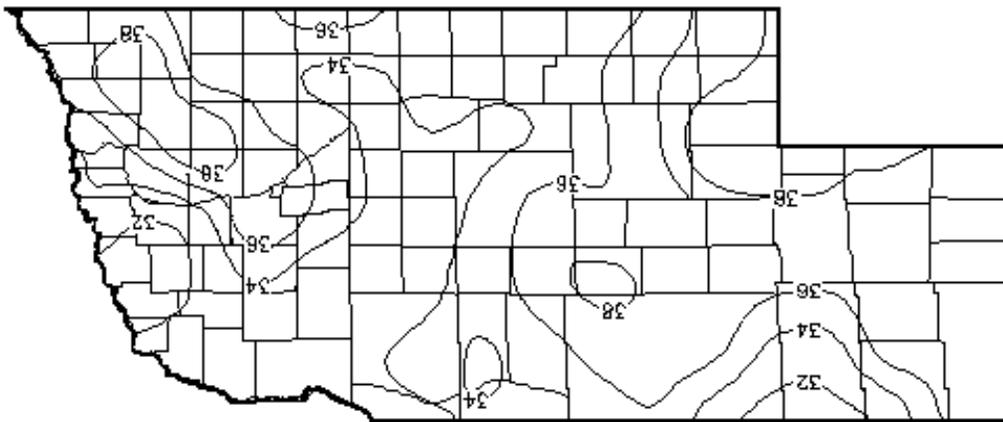
SOUTHEAST

PAWNEE: Snow has been melting off, soil conditions very wet. Ponds are looking good from slow snow melt. Stored grain has been moving out of bins.
RICHARDSON: The snow has melted with little run off. Stock ponds are low and hopefully will be recharged with spring rains. Farmers are moving grain to take advantage of the good prices. Farmers are also getting ready for spring field work.

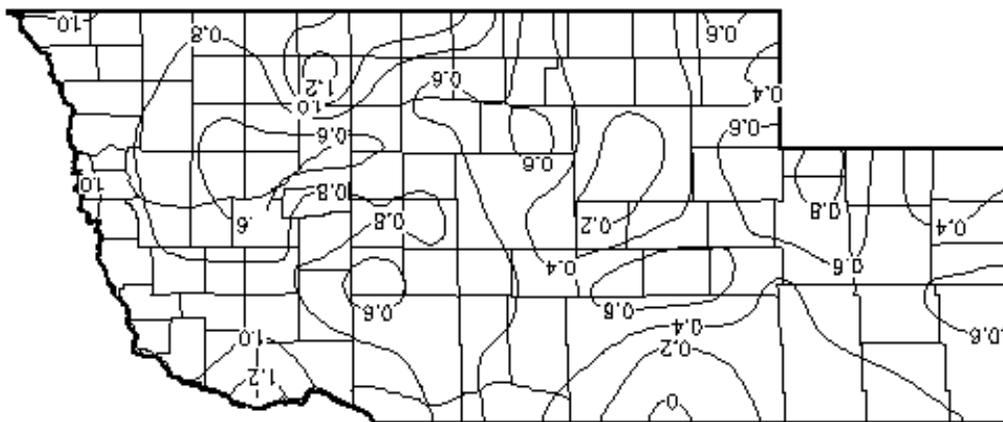
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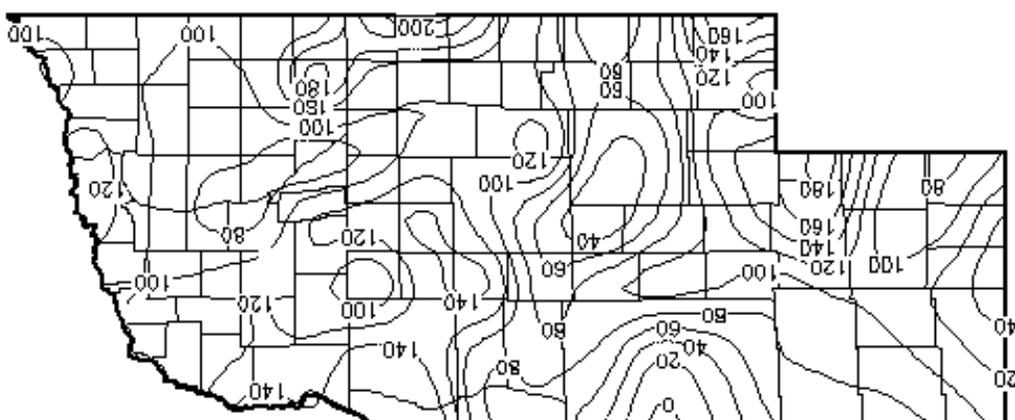
¹ Source: High Plains Regional Climate Centers Automated Weather Data Network (AWDN).



**AVERAGE TEMPERATURE AT THE FOUR INCH DEPTH UNDER BARE SOIL
FEBRUARY 1 - FEBRUARY 29, 2004¹**



PRECIPITATION IN INCHES FOR MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2004¹



PRECIPITATION AS PERCENT OF NORMAL FOR FEBRUARY 2004¹