General: The month of December brought warmer than average temperatures and very little snow accumulation to the state, according to the USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, North Dakota Field Office. While the mild weather conditions were welcomed by most, some winter wheat and alfalfa producers expressed concern over the lack of adequate snow cover for their crops. County and secondary roads on January 1 were rated as 97 percent open and 3 difficult. Road conditions were 16 percent icy, 1 muddy, and 83 dry. Agricultural activities during December included grazing, moving, and vaccinating cattle.

Statewide, average snow depth was 0.2 inches on January 1, compared with 18.3 inches at this time last year. The north central district reported the highest snow depths, with 1.5 inches received. The west central, southwest, and south central districts reported no snow accumulation so far.

Crops: As of January 1, snow cover protection for alfalfa was rated 98 percent poor and 2 adequate. Snow cover protection for winter wheat was rated 94 percent poor and 6 adequate.

Livestock: Cattle conditions were rated 11 percent fair, 68 good, and 21 excellent. Sheep conditions were rated 12 percent fair, 74 good, and 14 excellent. Hay and forage supplies were rated 2 percent short, 66 adequate, and 32 surplus.
Weather: Overall, December had above normal temperatures. Precipitation was below normal across much of the state with near normal precipitation in parts of the southwest, central, and northeast. There were two time periods during the month that received much of the total monthly precipitation. One period of precipitation was during the first week of the month when snowfall totals ranged from 1 to 5 inches over parts of the west and central. Another period of precipitation occurred on December 29-30. Snowfall amounts ranged from 2 to 5 inches in parts of the central and east with the highest amounts in the north central and parts of the northeast.

Outlook, January: January will start out with above normal temperatures with below normal precipitation. Above normal temperatures will continue across much of the state for the second week of the month with near normal precipitation. Temperatures for the second half of the month should be near normal with near to above normal precipitation. Overall for the month of January, the state will see near to above normal temperatures and near normal precipitation.