

# AgriLife NEWS

January 26, 2010

## Texas crop, weather

Fields wet and sloppy in many areas

By: **Robert Burns**, 903-834-6191



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COLLEGE STATION -- Whether it rained or not this past week, many areas remained too wet for field work, according to reports from [Texas AgriLife Extension Service](#) personnel.

Wet conditions persisted in the [Coastal Bend](#), [East](#), [Southeast](#) and [North](#) regions, in many instances putting a halt to field work and other farming operations.

Other parts of the state, including the [Panhandle](#), [Rolling Plains](#) and [West Central](#), had the opposite problem. Limited soil moisture was the common theme. though in most cases moisture levels were not yet at critical levels.

In contrast, the **South** and **West Central** areas reported adequate to excellent soil moisture.

**Dr. Larry Stein**, AgriLife Extension horticulturist based in Uvalde, said soil moisture levels and the general conditions for the region's growers of spinach, cabbage and other vegetables is better than he's seen in years.

"Things are looking up," Stein said. "After the severe cold, we were kind of concerned about the condition of the crop. We had a little bit of burn on the older spinach, but the younger stuff wasn't hurt at all. So we're back to harvesting fresh-market spinach."

Stein said the cabbage was unharmed as well, and that it was still being harvested. Growers were also planting some more spinach to extend the season.

"Conditions were extremely wet. And now that we've had sunshine and things have dried out, so we're back in the fields doing what we're supposed to do," he said. "Really, we're in excellent shape for planting later on in the spring. It's been a while – many years – since we had this good of moisture this early in the season."

Reports from **Delta County**, northeast of Dallas, and much of the rest of North Texas, weren't quite so sunny.

"In Delta County, its primarily Houston black clay and a lot of other heavy soils, and that gets to be real messy," said Michael Berry, AgriLife Extension agent for agriculture and natural resources.

Berry said the wet conditions have persisted since late summer and the fall, and that producers in his county have only gotten about a third of the wheat planted that they would normally.

"The sun will come out and start to dry things out, then it rains again," he said. "People are even having a hard time feeding hay. Even tractors are getting stuck now. It's that wet."

The following summaries were compiled by AgriLife Extension district reporters:

**COASTAL BEND:** Though there was no significant rain, most areas remained too wet for field work. Warmer temperatures and good soil moisture promoted growth of winter grasses. Beef producers were still providing supplemental feed to livestock.

**EAST:** Above-average temperatures across the region helped winter forages recover from the previous week's freezing weather. Rain fell over most of the area. Severe storms brought heavy rains, high winds, hail, and even tornadoes to some of the counties, with damage to buildings and timber. Livestock were in fair to good condition with producers supplying supplemental feed.

Producers were concerned about the amount of hay livestock consumed during the freezing weather and began to investigate purchasing more. Farmers began preparing fields for spring crops. Feral hogs continued to damage pastures and crops and pose hazards on rural roads and highways.

**FAR WEST:** Days were warmer with night temperatures above freezing. High winds blew dust and dried out rangelands and grasses. The third leaves of fall-planted onions were emerging. The pecan harvest was nearly complete. Alfalfa remained dormant. Growers were preparing land for the sowing of spring wheat. Fields were also being prepared for cotton and chile planting.

**NORTH:** Soil moisture ranged from adequate to surplus. Fields and pastures were wet and sloppy, putting a halt to field activity. The planting of wheat and oats was further delayed and winter pastures were not doing well. Recent warmer weather made things much more tolerable for livestock. Because of the very wet conditions, cattle producers were not able to graze winter pasture areas, so supplemental feeding and haying continued. Hay reserves were quickly diminishing. Livestock remained in fair to good condition. The cotton and pecan harvests were complete. Rangeland and pasture conditions ranged from very poor to good. With the return of warm temperatures, there was concern of early budding and flowering crops.

**PANHANDLE:** Soil conditions remained short to very short with little to no moisture received. Good moisture was needed by wheat, for ground preparation for spring planting and winter rangeland grasses. Field work continued with manure spreading, fertilizing and general field preparation. Winter wheat was in fair to poor condition, and above average temperatures coupled with high winds added to the stress the crop was already under from lack of moisture. Cattle were only grazing on the irrigated wheat fields. Some cattle had to be removed from wheat pastures because of overgrazing. Producers continued providing supplemental feed to cattle. Lice were becoming a problem in some herds.

**ROLLING PLAINS:** Warmer weather and plenty of sunshine helped wheat pastures, but the crop still needed rain. Windy weather took a toll on top soil moisture. Some wheat showed damage from extreme cold. Livestock were in fair condition thanks to supplemental feeding. Hay was in short supply, and beef producers hoped to avoid another major winter storm. Cattle that were turned out on wheat pasture were in good condition with respectable gains. Cotton growers were finishing up the harvest. The region's gins were still busy, but were expected to finished up in a couple of weeks.

**SOUTH:** Milder and warmer days, cooler nights and some rainfall were reported throughout the region. Soil moisture levels were adequate, and some rangeland and pastures were greening up prematurely. Grazing conditions on wheat and oats were good. Potato planting was in full swing, and a lot of field work and fertilizer applications were being done in the northern part of the region. No field work was reported in the eastern part of the region, but it was expected to resume

as soon as fields dried out. In the western part of the region, as much as 5 inches of rain fell. Growers resumed harvesting spinach and cabbage. Also in that area, oats and wheat were mostly good, and onion crops are recovering from tip burn due to a previous hard freeze. Onion crops are also progressing well in the southern part of the region. Cloudy conditions reduced forage production, but cool-season forages were abundant in most rangeland and pastures. Stock tank water levels rose, but the condition of livestock worsened because of declining forage and additional stress from cold and muddy pastures. Producers continued supplemental feeding of cattle. Hay prices increased due to the high demand.

**SOUTH PLAINS:** Conditions were almost springlike, with warm and windy days, highs in the 50s or above, and lows generally above freezing. Winds gusted to 40 mph, blowing dust. Soil moisture was short to adequate. Producers continued with field operations, including shredding corn stalks and field preparation. Winter wheat was in fair to good condition and continued to mature. Pastures and rangeland were in fair to good condition but needed rain. Cattle were in good condition with producers continuing to provide supplemental feed.

**SOUTHEAST:** With more rain, soils in some counties were saturated. Winter grasses were stressed by the excessive moisture and an early January freeze. Normally, corn and grain sorghum planting was less than two months away, but planting preparations have been finished on only about 20 percent of fields. Milder weather helped ease the stress on livestock, though hay feeding continued as supplies dropped. Some pastures continued to decline, mainly due to the dry summer conditions, lack of hay and overgrazing.

**SOUTHWEST:** Winter vegetable crops made excellent progress thanks to the open, cool weather and plentiful moisture. The soil moisture levels were good, especially compared to this time during the last four years. Cool weather helped conserve moisture. Soil moisture levels were high enough that early spring planting will be possible. Wheat, oats and winter vegetable crops made excellent progress. Growers continued harvesting of spinach, cabbage, carrots and lettuce, and the planting of potatoes. Ranchers were concentrating on the calving, lambing and kidding seasons.

**WEST CENTRAL:** Temperatures were higher than normal. Soil moisture remained adequate. Producers hoped the soil-moisture levels would continue to be as good as spring planting approaches. Winter wheat was doing very well with the warmer temperatures, causing the crop to come out of dormancy. Rangeland and pasture conditions were improving. Beef producers were providing supplemental feed. Water levels in stock tanks and ponds continued to drop.

# AgriLife Communications

1501 Texas Avenue South | 2112 TAMU | College Station, TX 77843 | [Map](#)

Phone: (979) 845-2211 | Fax: (979) 845-2414 | Email: [AgriLifeWeb@tamu.edu](mailto:AgriLifeWeb@tamu.edu)

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