OSU EXTENSION SERVICE

MID COLUMBIA FARMER'S NEWSLETTER

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Grain Prices

The average price for soft white wheat in Portland for **March and April was $6.20 and $6.23** per bushel for 10.5% protein. A year ago the price was fairly similar at $6.20 and $6.21 during March and April. So far **the average price in May is at $6.33** per bushel, a year ago the price was $6.23. Barley prices were at $170 per ton March through April and increased to $180 per ton in May.

Sherman County Rain

Rainfall at the Sherman Experiment station was 0.42 inches in March and 0.66 in April. **Average precipitation in Moro for the crop year so far is around 96% of the 30 year average with 9.66 inches through the end of April.** However, average precipitation in Moro for March and April is at 60% of average. Across Sherman County average precipitation during March and April was 0.54 and 0.96 inches. Rainfall in March ranged from 0.22 outside of Moro to 0.80 near Wasco. Rainfall in April ranged from 0.60 in Wasco to 1.50 outside of Wasco. The AgriMet weather station above Rufus reported 0.7 in March, 0.43 in April, and 0.05 so far in May. So far the weather station has recorded 5.7 inches of precipitation this crop year, but appears that there was a sensor malfunction over the winter that has been resolved.

Wasco County Rain

Crop year rainfall at The Dalles Airport is at 10.58 inches at 88% of the 30 year average as of the end of April. Average precipitation across Wasco County in March was 0.73, ranging from 0.05 inches east of The Dalles at Fairbanks to 3.0 in Mosier. April average rainfall was 0.42 ranging from 0.28 inches at The Dalles Airport to 1.34 in Antelope. The AgriMet weather station in Dufur reported 0.39 inches in March, 0.62 in April, 0.04 so far in May, and a total of 9.18 inches so far this crop year.

Climate Outlook

Over the next three months NOAA is calling for a 50-60% chance for above average temperatures and a 40-50% chance for below average precipitation. The Oregon state climatologist predicts the next three months (May - July) to have about average temperature with precipitation at 93% of normal for the North Central Region of Oregon (Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Morrow, and Umatilla Counties). The forecast for May is for temperatures to be 1.0°F above average with precipitation at 79% of average. June is forecasted to have temperatures 0.7°F below average and precipitation at 105% of average. July is forecasted to have temperatures 0.7°F below average with precipitation at 124% of average.

May precipitation across most of the Mid Columbia region is so far averaging around 0% of normal with temperatures about 5-7°F above average across the region. The last three months had temperatures 1-3°F above average with 100 to 110% of average precipitation. Much of Oregon is now entering into drought with the southern ends of Wasco and Sherman Counties now in drought status according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

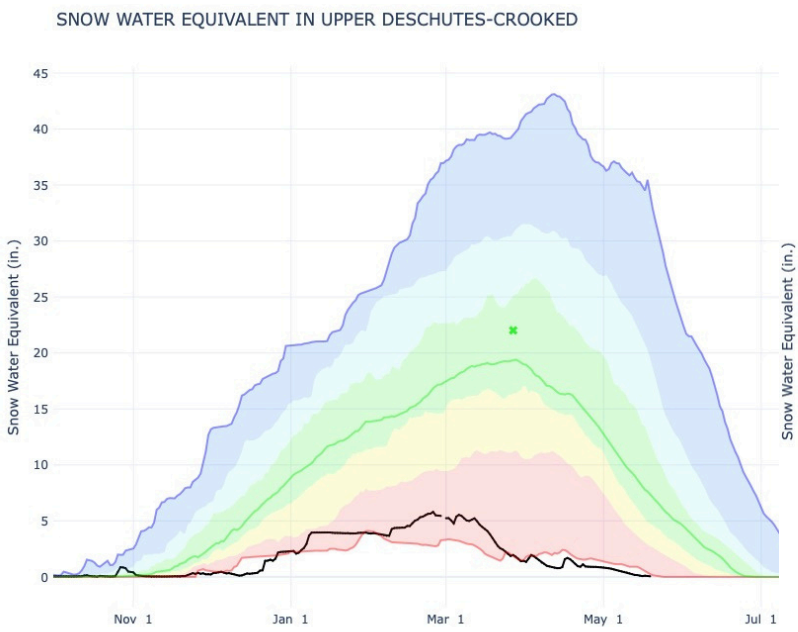
Oregon State University Extension Service

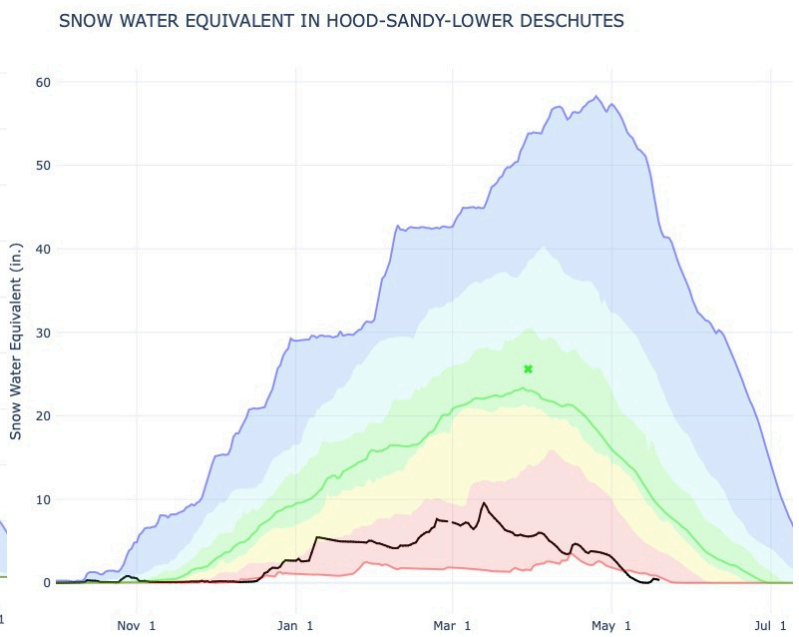
Snow Pack Update
The spring melt out happened this year at a record pace with USDA hydrologists predict extremely low streamflows across the west this summer. Streams in the Mid Columbia region are expected to be at 84% of their average volume and flow. There was some additional snow fall in mid May that may help boost streams temporarily. Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming all set new record low April 1 snow water equivalent values since SNOTEL snow monitoring began in the 1980s. March was warmer and drier than average across most of the west, with the exception of Washington state.

For the snow survey station near the headwaters of Fifteen mile creek in Wasco County snow water equivalent is at 2% of median with precipitation at 81% of median for the water year (since October 1st). This is only the fourth year of data collected for that site.

For the Hood, Sandy, and Lower Deschutes Basin snow water equivalent was at 4% of median as of May 19 with precipitation at 87% of the water year median.

For the Upper Deschutes Basin snow water equivalent was at 1% of median as of May 19. Precipitation is at 66% of median. The solid dark black line in the figures below indicate the current year snow levels compared to previous years.





Wheat Crop Conditions
Overall the winter wheat crop is looking promising in the Mid Columbia so far, but if the dry weather continues and temperatures get hot in a hurry yield will be decreased. The recent USDA NASS crop conditions report on May 16th rated winter wheat in good condition across the Pacific Northwest. Winter wheat in Oregon is rated as 6% very poor, 11% poor, 25% fair, 37% good, and 21% excellent. Washington's winter wheat is looking a little better with 59% higher in the good category and 23% in the excellent category. Idaho also has a strong crop with higher ratings than Oregon or Washington in the good (75%) and excellent rankings (11%). Across the 18 state region that NASS reports on for winter wheat the crop is rated with 18% very poor, 25% poor, 30% fair, 22% good, and 5% excellent.

USDA estimates that as of May 17th 34% of the winter wheat crop in Oregon is headed, up 10% compared to the five year average and 5% from last year. Washington wheat is 24% headed out and also 5% above this time last year. This is a slight improvement from a week ago with an increase in the good and fair rankings. A year ago at this time winter wheat conditions were rated similar across the 18 state region with 6% very poor, 12% poor, 30% fair, 44% good, and 8% excellent.

Wheat Marketing Outlook
USDA recently released the World Supply and Demand Estimates report for May. In the United States both harvested acres and yields are expected to be lower, resulting in lowered supplies and lower ending stocks. Production is expected to be 11.5 MMT lower than last year. This does come as some good news that USDA predicts that tighter ending stocks and supplies should boost the national average farm price for wheat to $6.50. The Winter Wheat Quality Tour happened earlier this month in Kansas and the crop there is not in good shape with many farmers expected to graze or abandon wheat fields due to drought and large weather swings this year. The central and Southern plains continue to be plagued by drought.

Wheat Marketing Outlook Continued...
On the global stage production is also expected to be lower coupled with lower import demand from North Africa and the Middle East. Both Egypt and Morocco are having good crops and trying to decrease imports. Ukraine is expected to have the greatest production since the Russian invasion in 2022. However, other countries, such as India are expected to have lower production due to drought issues and issues related to the middle east conflict causing fertilizer disruptions and price hikes. Australia is also expected to have less wheat thanks to the Iran war with many producers shifting to canola that requires less fertilizer demand. Wheat acreage in Australia is expected to be down by 14% with an increase in canola by 16%.

Fertilizer Trends
Fertilizer prices continue to increase in May, but the rate of increase has slowed, similar to the price of fuel. Prices increased significantly in mid March following the start of the war in Iran. Hopefully you were able to lock in fertilizer prices prior to this conflict as fall planting may be significantly more expensive than previous years. Already there is much speculation in corn producing states that many farmers are expected to switch to soybeans that require less fertilizer inputs. Across the United States farmers will likely see a sharp increase in input costs for the 2027 crop. Here is the price breakdown from the middle of May:

- **Anhydrous is up slightly from a month ago, but up 43% from a year ago** at $1,118/ton or $0.68/lb. of nitrogen.
- **Urea has increased slightly from a month ago, but up 39% from a year ago** at $865/ton or $0.94/lb. of nitrogen.
- UAN28 has increased slightly from a month ago and is up by 30% from a year ago at $530/ton or $0.95/lb of nitrogen.
- UAN32 is up slightly from a month ago and up 23% from last year at $596/ton or $0.93/lb of nitrogen.
- Potash is up slightly from last month and up 4% from a year ago with an average price of $493/ton.
- DAP is up 6% from a month ago and up 16% from a year ago with an average price of $914/ton.

Stripe Rust Update
Overall despite some early stripe rust pressure, there has been little rust found in the Mid Columbia Region. Producers likely would have seen stripe rust in susceptible varieties had they not applied fungicides during their first herbicide application. A few producers still found stripe rust on susceptible varieties during late April even after making an earlier fungicide application. Remember to start rechecking fields about 20 to 30 days after the first application. If active stripe rust appears in the field, a second fungicide application should be done before rust incidence reaches 5% on flag leaves. A few producers and I noticed stripe rust on foxtail barley in ditches and other areas of farms. Foxtail barley lacks the genetic resistance that commercial wheat varieties have and also is infected with different species of stripe rust than what would infect a commercial field of wheat or barley. However, it is still important to take note of seeing stripe rust on wild barley species, it is a sign that conditions are conducive to rust. You should continue to monitor fields for rust, but this does not warrant calling in the spray plane unless you detect rust in your wheat.

It appears that the drying and warming trend that is predicted to continue will help keep rust pressure low. Always remember that your fungicide product choice should factor in variety susceptibility, crop yield potential, product cost, and your budget. If you are not seeing rust at this point it is likely not worth the investment of an additional late season fungicide application.

Cattle Markets
Cattle markets continue to stay strong, one of the few agricultural commodities that continue to be profitable at this time. **For the week ending on May 8th, national live steer prices were at $258.32 per cwt** (hundred weight), up $3.30 per cwt from a week ago, and up $34.24 per cwt from a year ago. Dressed steer prices were at $402.37 per cwt, up $3.29 per cwt from a week ago, and up $46.31 per cwt from a year ago. Choice beef cutout prices were at $389.77 per cwt, up $0.74 per cwt from a week ago, and up $44.12 per cwt from a year ago. 550 pound steer prices increased 33% year over year to exceed $5.05 per pound nationwide in April.

Cattle numbers and slaughter processing is lower than a year ago with slaughter down by 134,000 head from a year ago. During the first quarter of the year cattle slaughter declined by 8.5%. Cattle weights are up by 42 pounds from a year ago at 1,471 lbs, which is helping offset lower cattle slaughter numbers. However, despite heavier weights beef production is still down by 14.6 million lbs from a year ago.

Cattle Markets Continued...
The number of cattle on feed in feedlots continues to be tight. Cattle marketing in March was about 7.3% lower than a year ago. Increasing drought across the United States is hampering cattle herd rebuilding. In late April USDA reported that 63% of the cattle inventory is in a location experiencing drought. A recent report also indicated that the ratio of heifers in feedlots is at 37.3%, similar to the level of 37.6% a year ago, and indicates that heifer retention is likely not at a high enough level for herd rebuilding to occur. It is a challenging time for beginning ranchers to enter into the cattle business given how expensive cows and replacement heifers are, along with rising fuel and infrastructure costs.

Hay Markets
Nationally the price for alfalfa hay is staying lower than last year, but prices will likely increase due to drought concerns across large cattle producing states and increasing demand. As of May 4, approximately 46% of U.S. alfalfa hay acreage was experiencing drought conditions. Due to drought concerns in the Klamath Basin many hay producers there may be fallowing land rather than producing hay, which will increase hay demand in Oregon. Pricing off the Oregon Direct Hay report (accessed here: https://beav.es/iTs) showed the following trends across Oregon:

- Over the last two months fair quality alfalfa has been selling for an average of $120 per ton, good quality alfalfa is at $160 per ton, and supreme quality is at $245 per ton.
- Premium grass hay has been selling at $300 per ton.
- Orchard grass with premium quality has been at $255 per ton.

Disposal of triple-rinsed empty chemical jugs
Do you have tripled-rinsed empty plastic jugs that need to go somewhere? In the past it was convenient to drop containers off at Chamberlin Distributing in The Dalles, but now that they have closed that location plastic jugs are harder to get rid of. You can schedule a pick-up of triple-rinsed empty containers for recycling by calling 503-390-2381 or email logistics@agriplasinc.com. Drop-off of triple-rinsed empty containers are accepted at AgriPlas Inc., 5016 Waconda Road NE, Brooks, 97305, north of Salem. If there is enough local interest there is a chance a collection event could be coordinated through OSU Extension Service or the Tri-County Hazardous Waste Program, which has hosted AgriPlas recycling events in the past.

Virtual Fence Workshop, Thursday, June 4th, Prineville, OR
This workshop will take place at the Clover Building at the Crook County Extension Office, at 502 SE Lynn Blvd, Prineville, OR from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. This meeting will start with a brief introduction of virtual fence and the purpose of the meeting. Use of virtual fencing in Gilliam County will be described by Herb Winters and Dallas Hall Defrees. Additional rancher perspectives will be shared, along with information from the Forest Service and BLM. NRCS will also provide updates on the practice, cost share, and requirements with NRCS. Opportunities to incorporate virtual fence into allotment grazing will also be discussed by agencies and virtual fencing vendors. This free workshop is being provided by NRCS and the Crook County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Northwest Oregon Ranching Academy
This program is tailored to cattle producers, those working in the cattle industry, and those interested in joining the industry. The objective of the Northwest Oregon Ranching Academy is to provide participants with the most up-to-date information on diverse topics related to cattle production. This is an in-person series with 5 modules. The modules are organized to precede major milestones of a spring calving herd. However, the information will also apply to fall calving herds. The modules will be held on the Oregon State University campus in the Oldfield Building on Saturdays; parking is free. All modules will be held from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm with light refreshments.

The modules are:
- Module 1: Breeding Season - Genetics & Genomics (May 23, 2026)
- Module 2: Weaning & Heifer Replacement (June 20, 2026)
- Module 3: Nutrition of Beef Females (September 19, 2026)
- Module 4: Environment & Cattle Production (October 17, 2026)
- Module 5: Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) Training (November 14, 2026)

For more information, visit the NW Oregon Ranching Academy Event Page.
Or copy this link in your browser: https://extension.oregonstate.edu/events/northwest-oregon-ranching-academy

For questions, contact Hayley White at Hayley.White@oregonstate.edu or call 971-612-0027

Crop Tours

Wasco County Crop Tour, Monday, June 1st, 8:30 am

The tour will start at the Dufur Wheat Variety Testing Plots (45.4840, -121.1045) at 8:30 am and end at JTI in The Dalles for lunch around noon. This year the plots are by the orchard block and not by the cemetery. Driving south towards Dufur take the next left after Boyd Market Road. The tour will feature wheat variety trials, wheat liming research, drone imaging, and use of newer technologies informing fertilizer recommendations. Sponsored by JTI, Wasco County SWCD, Sherman County Farm Bureau, and Oregon Wheat Growers League. Thanks to Ryan Clausen and Amy Kaser for allowing us to stop by their fields and hosting research trials. RSVP is not needed. 2 ODA pesticide credits are approved.

Sherman County Crop Tour, Tuesday, June 2nd, 8:30 am

The tour will start at the Sherman County Extension Office (66365 Lonerock Rd, Moro, OR 97039) at 8:30 am and end around noon at the Wasco City park for lunch. The tour will feature wheat variety trials, wheat liming research, drone imaging, use of newer technologies informing fertilizer recommendations, and the McGregor research plots. Sponsored by McGregor, Sherman County Farm Bureau, and Oregon Wheat Growers League. Thanks to Chris Kaseberg and Josh Macnab for allowing us to stop by their fields and hosting research trials. RSVP is appreciated for lunch provided by McGregor – register here: https://Bit.ly/2026FieldTour 2 ODA pesticide credits are approved.

Gilliam County: June 16th, 8:30 am, starts at the USDA Service Center, 234 S Main St, Condon, OR.

Morrow County:

- June 11th wheat variety tour - starting at 2 pm at Starvation Farms at 45.5779, -119.6019
- June 18th spring wheat variety tour, - starting at 4 pm at Haguewood Ranch at 45.29934, -119.59245

Experiment Station Field Days

- Monday, June 8th, Hermiston Station Wheat Field Day, starts at 8 am
- Tuesday, June 9th, Pendleton Station Field Day, starts at 8 am
- Wednesday, June 10th, Sherman Station Field Day, starts at 8 am at the indoor arena at the Sherman County Fairgrounds
- **OSU Field days are free to attend, but please register here: https://beav.es/c2F**

OWGL 100 Year Celebration, June 10th, 2 pm

This year marks 100 years since the formation of the Oregon Wheat Growers League. A 100 year celebration will take place in Moro, OR at the indoor arena at the Sherman County Fairgrounds on Wednesday, June 10th from 2 pm to 6 pm following the Sherman Experiment Station Field Day. **RSVP is required to info@owgl.org or call 541-276-7330.** The theme for the event will be, "100 years of Oregon Wheat: Honoring the Past, Growing the Future," to reflect on the legacy of the League, its history, and the opportunities ahead. We will recognize and hear from the leaders, partners, and community members who have supported the League over the past century, followed by a dinner and an evening of entertainment and community. Throughout the day, there will be a silent auction, interactive kids' activities, tours of the Sherman County Historical Museum, and more!

Online Farm Safety and First Aid Course

Free on demand webinar | OSU Extension online course for Farm Safety and First Aid. In this self-paced online course, you'll gain life-saving knowledge and first aid skills tailored for the farm environment. This course is ideal for farmers, ranchers, farm employees, and anyone who works in agricultural or rural settings. Learn more here: https://beav.es/x8a or access the Spanish course here: https://beav.es/o53.

AgWest New Producer Grant

This grant program celebrates the ingenuity and passion of new producers and helps them bring dreams to fruition with $15k grants. This program was developed for those who have a vision for their operation but lack the funds to put their plans into action. Learn more and apply by May 31 here: https://beav.es/fdX.

Increased Insect Pressure this Spring

If you are an alfalfa hay producer you likely noticed how much earlier alfalfa weevils emerged in hay fields this spring. Unfortunately we continue to see insecticide resistance with alfalfa weevils to many chemistries that were over used in the past. Steward is one insecticide that generally continues to successfully reduce alfalfa weevils. But be careful overusing it, as there are not many other insecticdes that will still work. Another option is an early first cutting to expose the weevils to sunlight and reduce their food supply, but often this results in significantly lower yields. In fields that are only partially infested one option would be to just do several outer passes where weevils may be more highly concentrated. Most of you have already or are close to making a first cutting and the window to apply Steward is likely closing, but these are options may be helpful in the future.

Increased Insect Pressure this Spring Continued...
Similarly, be on the look out for more insects in grain storage. It appears that the milder winter increased insect pressure in grain bins. There could also be some insecticide resistance going on as well, but likely not as severe as with alfalfa weevils. Consider rotating the mode of action for the insecticide you are using if possible. Diacon II has usually been used for wheat storage here in the Mid Columbia Region and there are very few documented insecticide resistance issues with it, but something to think about if it appears to be less effective.

Ready for fire season?
Wildfire season is right around the corner or has already started. There is still time to think about improving defensible space on your property and considering the use of strategic fuel breaks to give fire responders a chance to safely suppress the fire. Fuel breaks are not meant to stop the fire, but rather reduce fire behavior so fire responders can safely suppress it. Fuel breaks should be at least 50 ft wide to modifying fire behavior next to wheat, 100 ft will give you an even better safety margin, especially under windy conditions or with steep slopes below. In thick sage brush this should double to 200 ft. It is also critical that fuel breaks are connected to solid anchor points that will prevent the fire from burning around the fuel break. Consider placing fuel breaks along existing roadways. Fuel breaks are usually only successful if fire responders can quickly access it. A bare earth fuel break is the most effective, but may not be suitable on steep slopes where erosion will be increased. Herbicides can also be used to reduce fuel height and quantity, though dead vegetation will still burn, but with lower flame lengths. Livestock grazing can be focused in pastures to create fuel breaks through the use of water and mineral tub placement. Virtual fences can also be used to set boundaries inside of pastures. Generally virtual fences can keep cows in place, but in the application of fuel breaks it appears to be less successful with cow-calf pairs as collars are usually not used on calves and cows may follow them past the virtual fence boundary. Be careful over grazing pastures with good perennial plants, but in areas thick with invasive annual grasses more grazing is likely needed. Usually a grazed strip should be about 400 ft wide with vegetation grazed down to 1 or 2 inches. Do not graze an entire pasture this low though. Grazing can then be gradually decreased in the half mile on either side of the grazed strip to 30% and lower within a ¼ mile and 16% and lower past that. Research has found that once shrub cover increases above 25% grazing is not enough to modify fire behavior effectively. A fuel break training is planned later this summer after wheat harvest is wrapped up that will include both class room time with invited speakers and time spent looking at fuel breaks implemented by producers in northern Sherman County.

Free wildfire classes to consider:
- OSU Extension Wildfire Preparedness in Agriculture Online Class: https://beav.es/w92
- OSU Extension Agricultural Wildfire Behavior and Suppression: https://beav.es/ibX
- Farmer Campus – Farming through Wildfire Season Course: https://farmercampus.com/fires/