

# MONTANA CROP PROGRESS



United States Department of Agriculture  
**NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE**  
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 Cooperating with the Montana Department of Agriculture



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## CROP PROGRESS AND CONDITION MONTH OF DECEMBER 2022

**AGRICULTURAL SUMMARY:** The month of December brought little precipitation and cool temperatures to Montana according to the Mountain Regional Field Office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA. Temperatures for the month of December ranged from average to eight degrees below average for areas along the western and southern borders of the State. Areas in the eastern portion of the State and along the northern border experienced temperatures 8 to 12 degrees below average. Precipitation for December was scarce, with monthly precipitation totals less than 1.5 inches for most of the State. Although areas of the State have received significant snowfall, the moisture content was low. Limited precipitation for the month did little to change drought conditions. According to the US Drought Monitor published on December 29, 2022, 87.9 percent of the State continues to experience drought conditions, unchanged from the end of the November. The amount of land rated as abnormally dry was 28.0 percent, compared to 21.2 percent at the end of November. Moderate drought was present across 24.8 percent of the State, down slightly from 26.2 percent at the end of November. Severe drought covered 22.9 percent of the State, down from last month's 25.0 percent and extreme drought was found in 12.2 percent of the State, down from last month's 15.5 percent. Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) totals for the State's basins remained mostly unchanged from the end of November. The SWE for the Bitterroot and Upper Clark Fork basins dropped below average to 96 percent of normal and 93 percent of normal, respectively. The St. Mary and Milk basin improved to above average SWE this month, with an SWE of 103 percent. All other basins remained above average, with SWE totals ranging from 131 percent of normal in the Madison Basin to 103 percent of normal in the St. Mary and Milk basin.

In Phillips County, there were reports of temperatures well below negative and reports of cattle drifting. Snowfall that was received was very dry and most blew away with high winds. Good amounts of snow were received in Valley County for December. Producers reported very little winter wheat seeding due to the extremely dry conditions in the county. Reports from Broadwater County indicate winter kill is likely due to ice developing on fields. Mineral and Missoula Counties reported very cold temperatures in December, with temperatures warming back up after a few days. Reports from Ravalli County indicate a weather pattern of snow, followed by warm temperatures melting the snow, then cold temperatures freezing the melted snow. This has formed significant ice in pastures and has made feeding livestock challenging. Topsoil moisture conditions were reported as 19 percent very short, 27 percent short, 53 percent adequate, and 1 percent surplus, compared with 11 percent very short, 51 percent short, and 38 percent adequate on the previous report. Subsoil moisture conditions were reported as 27 percent very short, 40 percent short, 32 percent adequate, and 1 percent surplus, compared to 38 percent very short, 45 percent short, and 17 percent adequate on the previous report. Snow cover was rated 38 percent good to excellent. Winter wheat was rated 1 percent very poor, 10 percent poor, 67 percent fair, 16 percent good, and 6 percent excellent. Pasture and range conditions improved slightly from the previous report with 24 percent rated very poor compared to 27 percent rated very poor at the end of November. An estimated 95 percent of cattle and calves are receiving supplemental feed and an estimated 88 percent of sheep and lambs are receiving supplemental feed.

Note: Monthly reports will be released for January on January 30, 2023; for February on February 27, 2023; and for March on March 27, 2023.

### LIVESTOCK PROGRESS

Commodity	Current report (percent)	Previous report (percent)	Previous year (percent)	5-year average (percent)
Cattle and calves				
Receiving supplemental feed.....	95	70	95	NA
Sheep and lambs				
Receiving supplemental feed.....	88	63	99	NA

NA – not available

(--) – zero

### SOIL MOISTURE CONDITION

	Current report	Previous report	Previous year	5-year average
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Topsoil moisture				
Very short.....	19	11	44	NA
Short.....	27	51	33	NA
Adequate.....	53	38	23	NA
Surplus.....	1	--	--	NA
Subsoil moisture				
Very short.....	27	38	47	NA
Short.....	40	45	36	NA
Adequate.....	32	17	17	NA
Surplus.....	1	--	--	NA

NA – not available

(--) – zero

### CROP, LIVESTOCK, PASTURE AND RANGE CONDITION

Commodity	Current report	Previous report	Previous year	5-year average
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Grazing accessibility				
Open.....	23	NA	29	NA
Difficult.....	37	NA	20	NA
Closed.....	40	NA	51	NA
Pasture and range				
Very poor.....	24	27	56	NA
Poor.....	17	19	38	NA
Fair.....	28	20	5	NA
Good.....	30	34	1	NA
Excellent.....	1	--	--	NA
Winter wheat				
Very poor.....	1	--	16	NA
Poor.....	10	11	55	NA
Fair.....	67	45	17	NA
Good.....	16	31	12	NA
Excellent.....	6	13	--	NA
Winter wheat – wind damage				
None.....	82	NA	64	NA
Light.....	13	NA	14	NA
Moderate.....	4	NA	4	NA
Heavy.....	1	NA	18	NA
Winter wheat – freeze and drought damage				
None.....	77	NA	63	NA
Light.....	22	NA	14	NA
Moderate.....	1	NA	18	NA
Heavy.....	--	NA	5	NA
Winter wheat – protectiveness of snow cover				
Very poor.....	1	NA	4	NA
Poor.....	36	NA	21	NA
Fair.....	25	NA	23	NA
Good.....	14	NA	50	NA
Excellent.....	24	NA	2	NA

NA – not available

(--) – zero