

A close-up photograph of a wheat field. The image shows several green wheat stalks with long, narrow leaves. The leaves are a vibrant green color, and the stalks are thick and upright. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the field. The overall scene is bright and healthy, suggesting a good growing season.

THE 2025 YEAR  
IN REVIEW:  
SEASONAL  
CONDITIONS  
AND KEY EVENTS

## KEY MESSAGES

- **March rain allowed early-sown April crops to establish, with crops dry-sown during the traditional sowing window emerging after rain in May.**
- **Late-winter rain, backed by carry-over reserve subsoil moisture and a late October rain, supported grain production.**
- **Many crops yielded above expectations, with barley a standout.**
- **Livestock generally did well, despite the day-to-day labour demands of feeding and watering stock.**

## 2024/2025 SUMMER RAINFALL

While the 2024 harvest was interrupted by wet conditions, January–February 2025 rainfall across the Riverine Plains was generally decile 3–6, with the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) reporting Victoria’s averaged summer rainfall was 22% below the 1961–1990 average — the driest Victorian summer since 2013–14. South east NSW generally held up better, thanks to summer storm events, with January–February rainfall decile 6 at Albury and decile 6–8 at Culcairn (Table 2). This meant surface soil moisture was low heading into autumn.

## AUTUMN SOWING CONDITIONS

Autumn opened with a mid-March rain, with rainfall well above average at most locations (deciles 7–9). This was useful for farmers prepared to risk an early April sowing, with biomass accumulation in early crops providing grazing opportunities and maximising the growth period for winter-type cereals and canola. Some early crops suffered moisture stress from the lack of follow-up rain post emergence.

The season then tightened quickly, with April rainfall very low almost everywhere (deciles 1–2). May was mostly below average, particularly in north-east Victoria (Miepoll and Dookie, decile 1), with several farmers observing that it “didn’t really rain until May” in some areas. In southern NSW, May rainfall was mostly decile 4–5.

Often, dry-sown crops sat for several weeks before May rains triggered germination, highlighting the success of dry-sowing as a risk management strategy, assuming rules of thumb were followed. However, pockets of moisture in some paddocks caused staggered germination, especially in canola, complicating in-crop operations.

## WINTER–SPRING CONDITIONS

July rainfall was mostly near-average (deciles 5–7), supporting mid-winter growth, however some locations remained drier, including Miepoll and Urana. In August, most sites across the Riverine Plains recorded decile 2–3 rainfall.

September brought a small lift in rainfall and farmer optimism, with most locations at decile 3–4. Dookie remained below average (decile 2), while conditions were comparatively better at Lockhart (decile 5).

Decile 2–3 rainfall during October kept spring on the dry side. However, late October rains proved season-saving for many, with wheat better able to capitalise than barley, which had already finished filling.

Although disease pressure was low overall, there were reports of unexpectedly high levels of crown rot, sclerotinia and black leg, especially in southern NSW.

Frost damage, although reported, was not widespread. Had a spring frost event occurred, it’s likely that many early crops would have risked yield loss.

A relatively dry spring and early October allowed hay crops to cure quickly, meaning quality was generally higher than the previous year.

Farmer feedback highlighted late-winter rainfall as a key turning point, helping shift paddocks from low confidence to a harvestable outcome and validating major decisions, including taking crops through to grain rather than cutting for hay.

## SLUGS

A Riverine Plains trial showed that slug damage in 2025 was lower than in 2024 in the irrigated wheat and canola crops, but slug numbers were higher in barley in spring. The higher spring slug pressure in barley was likely driven by earlier canopy closure and higher soil moisture, which created a cooler, wetter microclimate than wheat and canola, and lined up with the main spring breeding period.

## BETTER-THAN-EXPECTED HARVEST

Excepting early rain in November, harvest was mostly dry, allowing farmers to complete harvest quickly. December rainfall was patchy, driven by highly localised storms which delivered 10–60 mm over short distances. High winds were frequent, leading to harvest interruptions, as well as windrow losses. There were also numerous reports of header fires, which spread quickly in the windy weather.

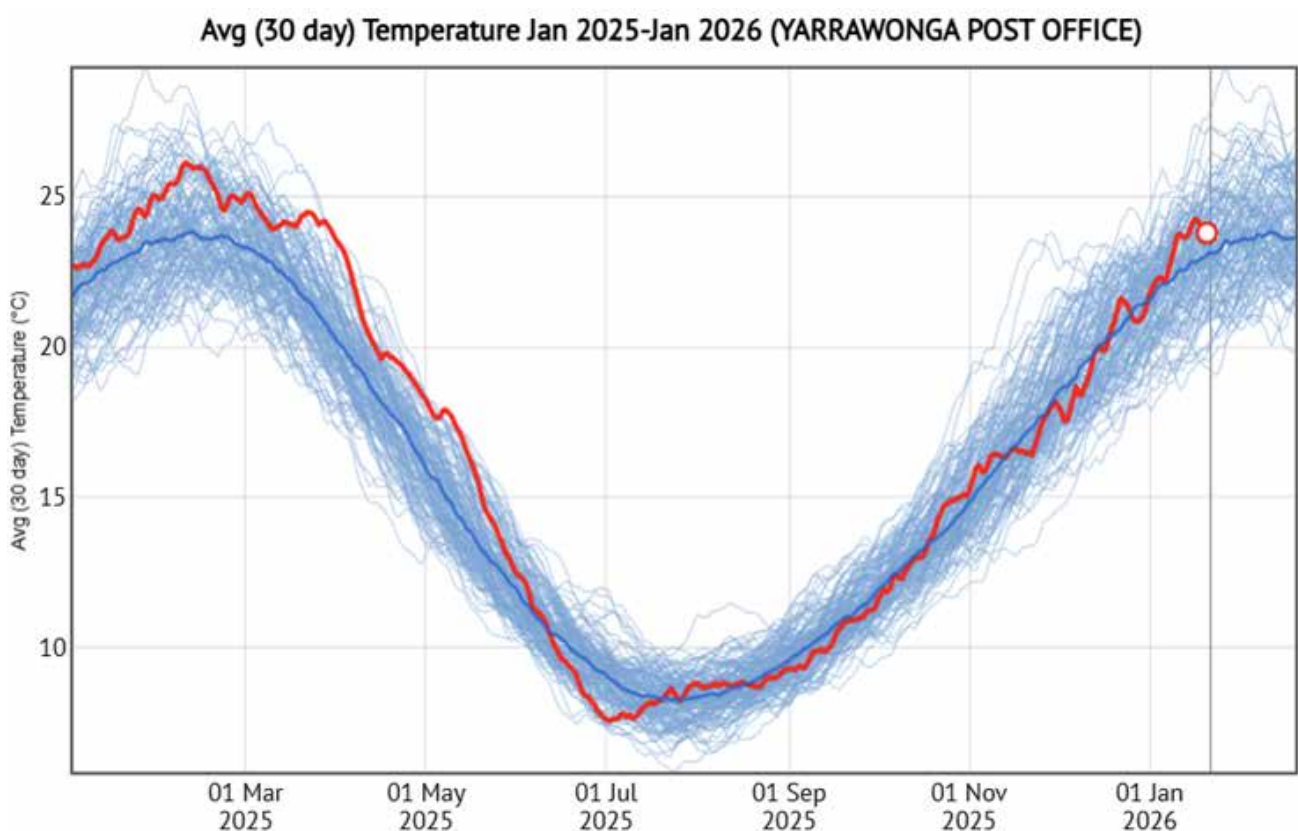
Despite very low rainfall (decile 1–2), growers noted crop performance was largely carried by reserve subsoil moisture from the previous year, topped up by timely late-winter rain. Many paddocks achieved yields well above the French and Schultz benchmark (Table 1), consistent with crops drawing on subsoil reserves during grain fill and likely benefiting from milder spring conditions. This matches the Yarrawonga 30-

day average temperature pattern which showed that summer–autumn was warmer than normal, while winter–spring tracked close to the long-term average, reducing heat stress and slowing moisture loss during key growth stages, and grain fill (Figure 1).

Barley was a stand-out in 2025, with its shorter growing season likely giving it an advantage over other cereals.

**Table 1** Potential yield at decile 5 at various locations across the Riverine Plains as predicted in October, 2025

	Miepoll	Rutherglen	Dookie	Yarrawonga	Cobram	Albury	Culcairn	Corowa	Lockhart	Urana
<b>Wheat (t/ha) – Decile 5</b>	2.6	3.8	2.5	3.4	2.4	5.0	3.3	4.2	2.6	2.1
<b>Canola (t/ha) – Decile 5</b>	1.3	1.9	1.3	1.7	1.2	2.5	1.7	2.1	1.3	1.0



**Figure 1** Yarrawonga 30-day average temperatures (°C), January 2025–January 2026 (red), compared with the long-term average (1990–present; bold blue); thin blue lines show individual past years and the historical range. (source CliMate, 2026)

## LIVESTOCK

Livestock producers began supplementary feeding early in the season, and although there were short breaks, this mostly continued through the year. Dual-purpose, long season cereal and canola varieties helped fill the early feed gap, performing well when sown after the mid-March rains, providing they had access to follow-up moisture. Sheep producers looked to off-load underperforming stock and weaned early, to preserve ewe health and maximise available feed and pasture resources.

Farmers continued to increase their use of containment feeding areas, with nutritionists helping to develop cost-effective feeding and supplementation strategies.

The dry spring saw dams begin to dry out, with tanks and troughs supporting delivery of clean water to stock. Many farmers took this opportunity to clean out dams.

Livestock prices remained solid, with many farmers reporting good returns despite continuous feeding and low dam levels.

**Table 2** Monthly rainfall and deciles (Dec) for various locations across the Riverine Plains, 2025

	Miepoll	Dec	Rutherglen	Dec	Dookie	Dec	Yarrawonga	Dec	Cobram	Dec
<b>January</b>	9	3	21	4	12	3	19	5	10	4
<b>February</b>	4	3	10	3	12	4	8	3	4	3
<b>March</b>	47	8	58	8	52	8	55	9	46	8
<b>April</b>	7	2	3	1	1	1	6	2	3	1
<b>May</b>	4	1	27	3	9	1	23	4	19	3
<b>June</b>	47	5	63	6	42	4	63	7	44	6
<b>July</b>	42	4	58	6	49	5	41	6	40	6
<b>August</b>	27	3	18	2	22	2	22	2	15	2
<b>September</b>	22	3	33	4	16	2	29	4	22	3
<b>October</b>	31	4	15	2	29	3	13	2	9	2
<b>November</b>	28	5	38	5	33	5	31	5	14	3
<b>December</b>	24	5	17	4	23	5	28	6	31	6
<b>Year (Jan-Dec)</b>	292	1	362	1	300	1	338	2	257	1

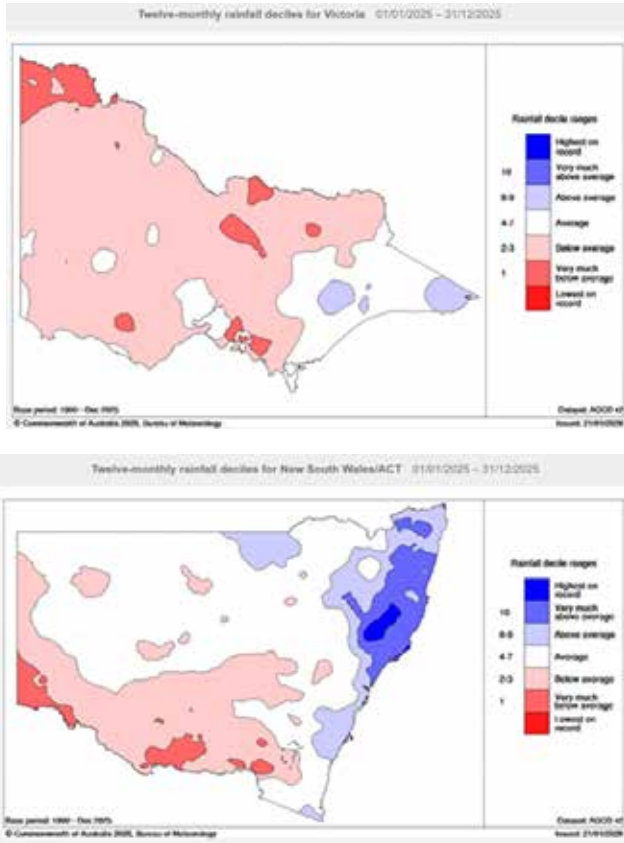
	Albury	Dec	Culcairn	Dec	Corowa	Dec	Lockhart	Dec	Urana	Dec
<b>January</b>	45	6	29	6	14	4	24	6	11	3
<b>February</b>	34	6	52	8	23	6	15	5	3	2
<b>March</b>	55	7	34	6	56	8	31	6	43	7
<b>April</b>	7	2	6	1	6	2	3	1	11	3
<b>May</b>	33	4	36	5	31	4	27	5	26	5
<b>June</b>	58	4	42	4	59	6	38	5	29	4
<b>July</b>	70	6	48	5	62	7	36	5	20	3
<b>August</b>	44	3	22	2	27	2	16	2	19	3
<b>September</b>	36	3	20	4	38	4	30	5	24	4
<b>October</b>	26	3	16	2	18	2	11	2	10	2
<b>November</b>	31	4	19	3	22	4	26	5	15	4
<b>December</b>	57	8	54	7	38	6	25	5	16	5
<b>Year (Jan-Dec)</b>	496	2	377	1	395	2	282	1	227	1

Dec = decile

Rainfall totals sourced from Bureau of Meteorology, ClimateARM Riverine Plains and Dookie Land Management Group on-farm weather stations.

## RAIN AND TEMPERATURE

Overall, 2025 rainfall was below average to very much below average across southeast New South Wales and north east Victoria (Figure 2a, 2b).



**Figure 2a and 2b** Full year rainfall deciles across Victoria and NSW during 2025 (source BoM, 2026)

Last year was the fifth-warmest year for NSW since records began in 1910, with an annual mean temperature 1.49 °C above the 1961–1990 average. Victoria recorded its eighth-warmest year since 1910, with an annual mean temperature 0.94 °C above the 1961–1990 average.

## SUMMARY

The 2025 season was driven by below-average rainfall and a warm background, with outcomes largely determined by rainfall timing and access to stored moisture at depth. Winter–spring rainfall was uneven with late-winter rain reported as the turning point that restored confidence to take crops through to grain. Despite limited “filling rain”, many paddocks yielded above French and Schultz benchmarks, likely supported by reserve subsoil moisture and moderated spring lower drying conditions.

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