

SPRING RAIN | BAKER COUNTY



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Lines of grass hay waiting to be baled in Baker Valley on July 5, 2022.

Grass:

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It was cold.

And when the skies brought precipitation it was often as not snow — dry snow that blew in the wind like sand, with scarcely enough moisture to darken the soil.

“We didn’t have any grass,” Pickard said.

But at the end of June, after the series of storms that delivered rain so reliably, the formerly dun hills are soft green.

“It has turned around completely,” Pickard said on June 28. “It’s one of the best grass years we’ve had in 30 years.”

One of Pickard’s ranching neighbors in Keating Valley, Frederick Phillips, shares Pickard’s descriptions both of how poor the outlook was in early

spring, and how much the situation has improved since.

“It looked terrible the first part of April, and even into the middle of April,” Phillips said.

Grass was so sparse, in fact, that Phillips said he postponed moving cattle onto spring range beyond the usual April 15 date.

“But then the rains came, and it’s one of the best years we’ve had in a long time,” Phillips said on June 29. “The grass in the hills is phenomenal.”

Mark Bennett, who owns a ranch near Unity, in southern Baker County, with his wife, Patti, also is pleased by the benefits that spring rains have brought to grass hay in that part of the county, which sometimes is drier than northern areas.

“It should be a real bountiful crop overall,” said Bennett, who’s also a Baker County

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