

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – OCTOBER 2011

General Summary. Temperatures averaged 53.4° or 2.6° above normal while precipitation totaled 0.76 inch or 1.85 inches below normal. This ranks as the 46th warmest and 9th driest October among 139 years of records. A drier October has not been recorded since 1988.

Temperatures. Temperatures averaged above normal on all but two of the first 15 days of the month with readings reaching into the 80's somewhere in the state every day from the 2nd through the 11th. The month's highest temperatures were 90° readings on the 4th at Clarinda, Shenandoah, Sioux City and Washta. Colder than usual weather prevailed from the 16th through the 21st. The season's first temperature in the teens was recorded at Sheldon on the morning of the 19th with a low of 19°. There had been several widespread freezes dating back as early as September 15, however, the first one of statewide extent did not arrive until the morning of October 21st. However, two locations, Dubuque Lock & Dam and Keokuk Lock & Dam, had yet to record a freeze by month's end. Warmer weather returned later in the month with one last day bringing a few readings in the low 80s coming on the 25th. Colder weather returned late in October with morning lows of 15° at Sheldon on the 29th and at Battle Creek on the 31st.

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 8% more than last October but 17% less than normal. Heating requirements so far this heating season (since July 1) are running 25% more than a year ago but 5% less than normal.

Precipitation. The dry weather pattern that has dominated most of Iowa since July intensified during October. Only two locations, Cresco and Winterset, reported above normal precipitation among 144 long-term recording sites. Monthly rain totals varied from 0.04 inch at Onawa to 2.71 inches at the Iowa City Airport. At both Carroll and Lamoni this month ranked only behind 1953 and 1975 as the driest October in over 100 years of records. Over two-thirds of the month's rainfall came with showers and thunderstorms on the 12th. No other date brought more than a statewide average of 0.04 inch. The statewide average precipitation since September 1st was the lowest since 1953 and fifth lowest among 139 years of records. The percent of Iowa's pastures rated in good to excellent condition fell to 19% on October 30 according to Iowa Agricultural Statistics, the lowest percentage since November 2, 2003. The persistence of the dry weather has resulted in stream flows falling well below seasonal normals over much of central, south central and southeast Iowa. The South River near Ackworth (Warren Co.) was at a record low level for the date at month's end. On the positive side the dry weather allowed the harvest to progress rapidly with 87% of the corn and 98% of the soybeans harvested as of October 30, about two weeks ahead of the usual pace.

Harry J. Hillaker
State Climatologist
Iowa Dept. of Agriculture & Land Stewardship
Wallace State Office Bldg.

Des Moines, IA 50319

Telephone: (515) 281-8981

E-mail: Harry.Hillaker@IowaAgriculture.gov