

Dry weather major concern for burley stripping

By Chip Miller
 The abnormally dry weather condition across the state has been the major concern and topic of discussion of the burley farmers in recent weeks.

"It's been about as rough a year as I've ever seen," said Nicholas County farmer Jimmy Caswell. He added he thought the crop was good this year, it is just the dry fall weather has affected the stripping of his burley.

And indeed this has been the top agricultural news story concerning all Kentucky burley producers.

"The last three months of near-drought in Kentucky have been devastating for our farmers," said Kentucky Agriculture Commissioner David Beaswell. "Yields have been cut on late

Tobacco market set Thanksgiving week

The 1987-88 burley tobacco market will open the traditional Thanksgiving week, and hold the usual 15 days of sales before the end of the year, according to the Burley Marketing and Sales Committee.

Markets in the eight-state belt will open November 23 for three consecutive days of sales before Thanksgiving. Sales again will be held November 30 through December 3, December 7 through December 10, and December 14 through December 17 before closing for the Christmas holidays.

Burley sales reopen January 4, 1988, and sell Monday through Thursday each week until all tobacco is sold.

The sales committee also designated Friday, November 13, as being the first day burley can be weighed officially for the 1987-88 sale. By law, leaf delivered to warehouses and weighed prior to November 13, will have to be reweighed before being sold.

The committee also requested that all leftover 1986 tobacco be sold on Monday, November 23, or as soon thereafter as possible. Also, units of tobacco on baskets or pallets may not weigh more than 700 pounds, with no more than 360 of these units being sold per hour.

Several tobacco companies have complained of excess nesting of tobacco in the past, i.e., higher quality and condition of

planted crops, tobacco stripping is being delayed on many farms, fall seeded small grains and pastures have been lost, causing hay feeding on some operations as early as August.

With the Kentucky burley auctions set to open across Kentucky on November 23, tobacco stripping has been slowed and is behind. It is estimated by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) that burley stripping was 22 percent completed as of last week.

The current quality of stripped burley is rated as 3 percent very poor, 3 percent poor, 47 percent fair and 43 percent good by the KDA.

Soil moisture across Kentucky on November 4 was labeled 89 percent very short and 11 percent short.

"Much of the state's tobacco

dried quickly instead of curing and has a light or mixed color. Rain is needed to allow tobacco to come into case a couple of times before stripping the crop," Beaswell said. "This should improve the quality and also help leaf color."

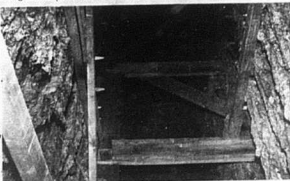
"Some burley is even being wetted down in order to come into case, according to the KDA.

"I've heard of some people trying to mist or steam their hang-

ing tobacco and it didn't work," said Caswell.

He said he'd heard of someone trying to spray down their whole farm, "but it still didn't help it out any."

Also, according to the KDA, some Kentucky burley farmers are delaying tobacco plant bud preparations for the 1988 crop until spring because of the extremely dry ground conditions.



Barn full of unstripped burley due to dry weather - Chip Miller Photo

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