

The Burley Season 1988 Page 2

Weather slows stripping

By Julie Pheltzer
 Local tobacco farmers are in the stripping room now, and Nicholas County Extension Agent Mike Phillips said about 14 percent of the county's crop is stripped.

The weather hasn't been cooperative, he said, and farmers are finding moisture in the stem. Depending on the weather and the availability of labor, Phillips said, the whole crop should be in by January.

Phillips said he has two points to emphasize to farmers preparing their crop for market. Over the years, farmers have been told to strip tobacco into specific grades, but in the long run the farmer hasn't seen any benefits in this method of stripping.

This year, Phillips said, things will be different. Foreign buyers expressed "a lot of displeasure" last year about tobacco that wasn't graded. American buyers will go

ahead and use the tobacco because they probably have a method for blending it, he said, foreign buyers, who usually give a better price, demand a better product.

Another problem last year that needs to be remedied this year, is "nesting", in which unscrupulous farmers may weigh down their tobacco bundles with dirt, metal objects and the like.

While Nicholas County doesn't suffer that much from the act, the industry as a whole has found it to be a problem, Phillips said. Foreign buyers, who have bought tobacco through American companies, will simply send the product back. The farmer's name is on the tobacco, corrective measures will be taken this year, he said. "I suggest they clean up their act."

For Nicholas County, the production quota is four million pounds, which ranks Nicholas County 30th overall in Kentucky county tobacco production.

Phillips said. About 5,700 farmers are producing tobacco in the county, he estimated, and that represents about \$4 million in income.

Tobacco is an important crop here, but the profit seems low when looking at the entire tobacco raising picture. Using figures from "Kentucky Agricultural Statistics", and making his estimate of a 2000 pound average production per farm, there is a \$3207.40 profit. After figuring in

variables like labor and leasing costs, the profit may end up between \$400 and \$600. With such a small profit producing tobacco every year may seem a futile effort. However, Phillips explains that tobacco is a traditional crop that has housed, educated and generally provided for farmers for hundreds of years. As small as the profit margin is, farmers know that they will get "a little something."
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About the cover...
 The picture on the front cover is a replica of a tobacco barn built in the late 1930s or early 1940s by Jay Wagner of Elizaville. The replica is now owned by Danny Hardwick of Pleasant Springs in Nicholas County. - Julie Pheltzer Photo

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GOODYEAR

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Weather

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Nicholas County's other major source of income is cattle. In fact, looking at Nicholas County's terrain and the farmer's technical expertise, Phillips sees the brightest outlook for farmer by increasing the number of cattle.

"Our weather is not historically oriented," Phillips said. Meaning that Kentucky is between the South, which can get a

crop out faster because their season is over before ours, and the

North, which starts after our season adds more competition. "This creates a very narrow window to slip things in, when the market isn't flooded."

Tobacco seems to be a microcosm of all farming woes. While tobacco exports were up three percent Phillips said, imports were up six percent.

1987 USDA-KY Burley Summary

Prices were steady to slightly higher for Burley to other hand, less tan, red and bacco auctioned in 1987 while tannish red appeared for sale losses were recorded for From a quality standpoint, about 34 percent.

Gains amounted to generally \$1 to \$4 per hundred and were more prominent for tan, red and tannish red percent of sales, while cutters increased to 21. Other groups colored marketings.

Losses of about the same amount occurred mainly for 6, tips - 5 and nondescript 4 tobacco designated as variegated, mixed, greenish or green. However, lowest non-descript dropped by \$16 to \$20 per hundred.

Top average recorded was \$163 per hundred for grade lion pounds or 9.3 percent NIF and the lowest \$80 for last year. The percentage NIF. Practical top was red around the largest increase actively small the first four over last season and made up weeks of the season, but increased sharply after the Variegated, greenish and Christmas break.

Loan receipts amounted to 90.0 million pounds or 21.4 percent of net sales this season compared with 58.8 million pounds or 9.3 percent NIF and the lowest \$80 for last year. The percentage NIF. Practical top was red around the largest increase actively small the first four over last season and made up weeks of the season, but increased sharply after the Variegated, greenish and Christmas break.

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