

# Shed burn evident

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only minor damage having occurred during the hot, humid weeks in the season.

The actual extent of damage cannot be estimated, at this time, but will be more accurately judged when stripping begins.

According to John Yocum, superintendent of the Penn State Southeast Research Laboratory in Landisville, the extent of shed burn is affected by several variables. Depending on the week the tobacco is cut, the location of the sheds, the amount of hanging space in each curing area, and the excess to which manure or nitrogen was applied to the soil, the effects of shed burn will differ from crop to crop. Another factor which can affect curing is the presence of livestock underneath the curing space. Animals - particularly steers and dairy - give off water vapor, which has a tendency to make the whole barn more humid.

Yocum, who has judged several tobacco shows at

local fairs, says, "There is no question that this year's quality is down."

The main problem this year is shed damage, although the color is not as uniform as it had been in other years. This problem, caused by a series of variables, is most affected by the temperature at curing time. The cooler the weather, the darker and more varied the crop tends to be. This year the county had a tendency toward a cooler curing period which led to the lack of uniformity.

To ease the problem of excess humidity and cool temperatures during bad curing environments, Yocum suggests use of a supplemental heat source.

In southern areas where burley tobacco is grown and air cured, gas fuel burners or charcoal pits are used to heat the air. When air warms, it evaporates the moisture on the tobacco, and with proper ventilation as it rises, carries the warm damp air out of the shed.

Yocum uses supplemental

heat at the research laboratory, and reports that he uses it only five to seven days on the average during an entire curing season. This apparent disuse of the equipment for 355 to 360 days of the year is the reason Yocum believes supplemental heat has not become more popular in Lancaster County.

"It's only in the bad years that you wish you had it," he says, "and, when the good year rolls around you don't need it, so it never gets set up."

This was one of those years growers could have put supplemental heat to use.

### Crop started out good

This year's tobacco crop started out with promise in the beginning of August. The plants were tall, the leaves long, and some farmers predicted a crop better than any they'd seen in 25 years.

However, the hot, humid weather of mid-August caused the unusually large, juicy tobacco harvested at that time to swell in the sheds and rip, or rot.

Around Labor Day the conditions cleared up for a short time, and some far-

mers were fortunate enough to get all the crop in before the rains of September began. But, those who weren't that fortunate ended up with soaked tobacco that also rotted in the sheds.

When the cool Fall winds of October swept over the county, most of the severe damage subsided, and farmers breathed a sigh of relief thinking the bulk of their curing problems were over.

But, according to Yocum, the crop is not in the clear at this point.

"If we run into another bad week, we can still have troubles," Yocum remarked on Thursday. The problems that can arise from this point on include mold growth if the tobacco gets too wet, and weight loss.

"What many farmers don't realize," says Yocum, "is that every time a crop gets damp it loses weight." Natural organisms which live on the leaves but are inactive during dry weather, become active when they become damp and actually work on the leaves. This causes weight loss.

"These are the same organisms we need for

# Poster winners named

LEBANON -- Winners were announced recently in a poster contest sponsored by the Lebanon County Conservation District. First place winners were entered in the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts statewide contest. A plaque with the student's name engraved will be presented to school where the student attends.

Henry Nauck elementary school

In the fourth grade through eighth grade division, winners included: 1. Judith Spangler, St. Cyril and Methodius; 2. Eric Boeshore, Jonestown Elementary; 3. Vernon Ditzler, St. Cyril and Methodius; and 4. Lesley Houser, Jonestown Elementary.

Ninth grade through twelfth grade division winners were: 1. Juan Olan, 2. Bill Sherk, 3. Rick Sidle, and 4. Janet Lawrence. All attend Lebanon Senior High School.

In the kindergarten through third grade division, winners included: 1. Robin Wolfe, 2. Michalle Fischer, 3. Sharon Long, and 4. John Barlett. All students attend

fermentation," says Yocum, looking on the positive side.

The amount of weight loss due to organism activity depends on the length the crop is damp. If it becomes wet one day and dries off the next, little weight loss will occur.

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