

MEMO

To: Agents in Tobacco Growing Counties

From: Paul Denton, <mailto:pdenton@utk.edu>
Professor and Extension Burley Tobacco Specialist
University of Tennessee and University of Kentucky
(865) 974-8839 office
(865) 599-0413 cell
(865) 974-7997 fax

Date: **September 27, 2009 1:14 PM**

Re: **Curing Burley Tobacco under High Humidity Conditions**

Following up on the topic of moldy tobacco and barn rot, Bob Pearce sent the message below to Kentucky agents on Friday, in response to several calls about putting heat in burley barns to try to reduce moisture. Attached are two older publications on the topic of ventilating barns with fans, and using various heat sources to try to dry the air in barns. Note Bob's precautions below about trying to use heat in burley barns. We don't have much experience with this, and the changes in marketing systems since 1965 make me particularly leery of any practice that might give an off color or an off smell, or leave soot on burley leaves. Before using any source of heat that might leave sooty residues or a smoky smell, or bring leaf into direct contact with combustion gases from burning natural gas or propane, growers should check with their buying company to see if this may be objectionable to them. We decided to send this information out since it is the best we have, but we really think that for nearly everyone, opening barns up as much as possible and using the drier air and breezy conditions we have coming this week is a lot better option than trying to use heat. If barns are tight enough to be able to control air flow and actually force air to go through, rather than around, the tobacco, fans may be a good option where there is a need to dry the tobacco out more quickly than natural drying will allow.

From: Pearce, Robert C [<mailto:rpearce@email.uky.edu>]
Sent: Friday, September 25, 2009 1:13 PM
Subject: Curing Burley Tobacco under High Humidity Conditions

This time last year we were worried about how dry it was and that the burley tobacco was curing too fast and going to be flashy. What a difference a year makes. We have had several calls over the last two days about the extended bout of wet weather and its effect on curing burley tobacco. Tobacco that has been curing for at least 3 to 4 weeks is susceptible to the growth of mold. Andy Bailey sent out a link to a mold publication yesterday but I have also included the link below as well. Growers are also reporting house burn/barn rot in many areas especially in recently hung tobacco. Obviously many growers want to know what they can do to manage these problems. There are no easy fixes. Contrary to what some growers may have heard there are no sprays or

magic powders that can be burned in the barn to eliminate or reduce mold and/or rot. The uses of “folk” remedies such as alcohol or sulfur are of questionable value and could result in undesirable residues on the crop (and we all know the tobacco companies’ attitudes on residues).

We have attached below two files for your use in discussing curing with growers.

One is on the use of fans in burley curing and may be of some use in talking to growers about how to use fans in humid conditions. Some growers may come in and ask about using coke (or gas) fires in barns like they did in the “old days”. We have almost no recent experience with this in burley barns, but it was once common. Attached is an excerpt from a 1965 publication that explains how to go about “firing” a burley barn.

We are not recommending this practice, but it may serve as a guide for growers who want to or have the materials to try it. We have several concerns including: the potential for barns getting burned down due to inattention, the potential for off colors due to fires that are too hot and not evenly distributed the deposition of undesirable residues or odors, and the potential to increase TSNAs in the leaf due to exposure to combustion gases. Our observation is that the process of applying heat in a burley barn is much more art than science and we don’t have many experienced artists any more. We hope this information will be useful for some of you.

<http://www.uky.edu/Ag/TobaccoProd/FactSheets/HTML/Tob-02-05.htm>

Bob Pearce, John Wilhoit, Andy Bailey, and Paul Denton

Dr. Bob Pearce
Extension Tobacco Specialist
University of Kentucky
319 Plants Sciences Building
1405 Veterans Dr.
Lexington, Ky 40546-0312
(859) 257-5110

[Curing with Fans](#)

[Burley Curing with Heat](#)

<http://tobaccoinfo.utk.edu>