

## **GREEN COUNTY AGRICULTURE NEWS**

### **What Burley Tobacco Variety Should You Pick for 2009?**

**December  
2008**

When it comes to diseases in burley tobacco, black shank ranks right up there at the top of the list. Losses to black shank are higher each year than all other past problems combined. During the 2008 season, statewide losses to black shank were high, but did not reach the levels of 2007. Part of the reason for that was the widespread use of resistant varieties across Kentucky.

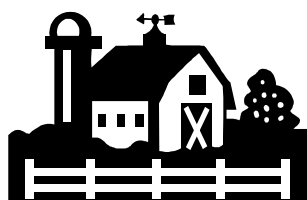
We've known for years that managing black shank involves several factors. Good sanitation and adequate land preparation are critical considerations, and crop rotation is a key factor. A good rotational strategy is to grow tobacco for one to two years in a field, followed by two to four years with another crop to prevent build up of the black shank pathogen. Fungicides can provide additional protection against black shank when used with rotation and resistant varieties.

So, which variety should you pick for 2009? The answer depends on the quality of the rotation scheme you use, the history of black shank in a particular field and whether or not race 1 of the black shank pathogen is present, like it is across most fields in the state.

Growers with no history of black shank can choose from a number of excellent varieties that have good yield potential and leaf characteristics but little or no black shank resistance. These include HB 04P and Hybrid 404. If a field doesn't have a history of black shank, pick a variety like TN 86, TN 90 or KT 200 only if you have been on a good rotation or you know disease has been light – that means less than 5 to 10 percent of the field having showed symptoms in the past.

If disease has been more severe, consider KT 204 or KT 206. KT 204 offers high levels of resistance to both races of the black shank pathogen. KT 206 was planted extensively in 2008 and has near-immunity to race 0 and the same high level of resistance to race 1 seen in KT 204. In University of Kentucky field tests and on growers' farms, KT 206 has outperformed other black shank-resistant varieties in terms of disease control and yield potential. An added benefit of KT 206 is moderate resistance to blue mold. New varieties such as Newton's 7371 or Rickard's HB 3307P have performed about as well as KT 204 in UK tests and specialists there say they would be good choices where disease is light to moderate.

Each year brings new challenges, but we can be certain that black shank will continue to be one of our main production constraints in 2009. Make plans now to pick the burley varieties that will perform best in your fields against black shank and get a leg up on this serious problem.



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#### **Online Newsletters**

The Green County Cooperative Extension Service is doing its best to meet the needs of its clientele. If you receive this newsletter and in the future would like to receive it through email, please let us know. We are continuing to look for ways to both provide information through an accurate and informative way, while also being cost effective.

*Brian S. Newman*

Brian S. Newman,  
County Extension Agent  
for Agriculture &  
Natural Resources



## Do You Have Enough Hay for the Winter?

The growing conditions over the past couple of years have made it difficult for horse owners to have enough forage for their horses. Summer pastures have been short, and we've faced limited and costly hay supplies.

For this winter's feeding season, hopefully horse owners were able to acquire sufficient hay supplies. How do you estimate the amount of hay you will need? If you have mature horses at maintenance level, you would want to feed a mainly forage diet.

The estimate would be similar to an 1,100-pound horse eating 2 percent of its body weight. That equals 22 pounds of hay per day. Feeding for 120 days, December through March would equal 1.3 tons of hay per horse.

What can you do to make the best of your hay inventory? Firstly, having a feed test would be a good idea. That way, you can make the best use of the nutrients supplied by the hay and supplement as needed. If you are unsure about getting your hay tested, you can contact your county agriculture and natural resources extension agent for help.

Secondly, you should feed the amount your horse needs per day. That essentially means some control over the feed intake. Feeding free choice can result in your horses eating more than they need each day to meet their nutritional needs. This can be a difficult task for those who are using hay rolls rather than square-bales.

Thirdly, you should use a suitable feeder for your horses to limit waste. Feeding on the ground can result in significant losses of feed. Researchers using square-bale hay, fed in controlled amounts, reported waste in the range of 20 percent, while others feeding roll-bale hay without a feeder, reported waste in the 35 to 38-percent range. In that case, horse owners would need at least a half ton more hay per horse.

Lastly, when you are buying hay, purchase the best quality hay possible.

As the feeding season progresses, monitor your horses to make sure they are maintaining body condition and adjust feed as needed. If you are short on hay, you may need to feed some concentrate to provide all the nutrients your horses require.

If you estimate correctly, you should have some hay left when spring grass finally arrives. It is better to have some leftover than to run out in March.

## Helping Sickly Plants Get Well

If the houseplants you just brought inside appear anemic, the cause may be an unfavorable environment in your home or disease problems.

The unfriendly plant environment could be the result of lower light, humidity or temperatures, drafts or improper watering or fertilization. These adverse growing conditions often lead to various diseases indicated by leaf drop, yellow leaves, death of leaf edge and tip and spindly growth.

To keep plants looking good, become familiar with each one's optimum growing conditions including light, moisture and fertility requirements.

If plants require high light intensity, clean the windows where these plants will be put to ensure that they receive the brightest light possible. The highest intensities generally are found in south-facing windows that are not blocked by outdoor vegetation or awnings. Plants likely will need less water and fertilizer when grown indoors so reduce these accordingly.

Another cause of the sickly appearance could be that while outdoors the plants were infested with insect pests or infected with disease organisms. This initial problem may become severe when you bring the plants indoors because the disease or insect's natural enemies are not in your home. Diseases that spread from one plant to another usually are caused by bacteria, fungi, viruses and nematodes that come into contact with plants outdoors.

Black, brown or yellow spots may indicate a bacterial or fungal leaf spot disease. To combat foliar diseases, pick off and destroy affected leaves, leave plenty of space between plants, move them to a less humid area and do not wet foliage.

Viruses are moved to healthy plants by insects and on human hands. To eliminate a viral problem, discard diseased plants.

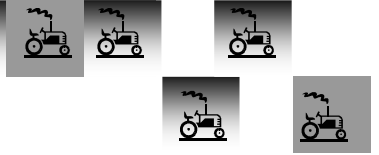
Soil borne organisms cause root and stem-rot diseases, which usually occur under very wet soil conditions. Preventive measures are to avoid overwatering plants and provide good drainage.

Common houseplant insect pests are aphids, mealybugs, white flies, scale spider mites and thrips.

Insecticides usually are not necessary on small infestations limited to a few plants. Dip a swab in rubbing alcohol to remove light aphid and mealybug infestations, or use tweezers or your fingernails to control them. Wash off mites by spraying plants with water.

Use a solution of two tablespoons of mild soap per gallon of water and a soft brush or cloth to eliminate heavy insect infestations.





## Winter Fruit Tree Care

During the winter months, home orchard owners need to protect their fruit trees from rabbits and voles. But hold off on any pruning until after the worst of the cold, winter weather has passed.

Rabbits and voles injure fruit trees by chewing the bark from the lower trunk and portions of the roots. This damage may kill or severely weaken the trees.

If grass has grown up around the base of the trees, it should be removed so as not to provide cover for rabbits and voles. If your trees are mulched, pull the mulch back for five to six inches at the base of the trunk to keep the rodents away.

Pick up and discard any fruit that remains beneath the trees to avoid attracting the rodents. Cleaning up fruit from the ground should be a part of annual fall and winter orchard cleanup.

Finally install rodent guards around the lower trunk. These may be plastic wrap guards that are commercially available. Home orchard owners can also construct their own guards using quarter inch hardware cloth.

The guards should cover the trunk to a height of 18 inches and encircle the trunk. During the winter months inspect the ground around the trees for tunnels in the grass or holes indicating vole activity. Use snap traps when vole activity is noted.

Prior to spring growth, prune out dead and diseased wood. Pruning increases air movement within the tree canopy, potentially reduces pest problems, improves spray coverage and promotes high-quality fruit production. Late February, March or early April usually is the best time to prune.

## Be Familiar with Winter Weather Terms

With winter upon us, it's important to closely follow local weather forecasts and warnings and be familiar with seasonal weather terminology. This knowledge could save lives.

Listening to a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) All-Hazards Weather Radio is one of the best ways to monitor severe winter weather notices. Part of a nationwide network of radio stations, this radio broadcasts National Weather Service warnings, watches, forecasts and other hazard information 24 hours a day. These radios only receive weather alerts for your specific county or the surrounding area. When issued by your local National Weather Service Forecast Office, weather radios provide an alerting tone when severe weather approaches your area.

Severe winter weather can completely immobilize an area. Heavy snow, blizzards or ice storms are a potential killer of people, pets and livestock. So when weather forecasts predict extremely harsh weather, make advance safety plans in case the conditions develop.

Explanations about some winter weather terms you might hear on radio or television broadcasts are listed below.

A winter storm warning is issued in anticipation of a combination of heavy snow, freezing rain or sleet. This warning usually is issued six to 24 hours before the weather is expected to begin.

A winter storm watch alerts you to the possibility of a blizzard, heavy snow, freezing rain or sleet. It usually is given 12 to 36 hours before the beginning of the storm.

A winter storm outlook is issued prior to a winter storm watch, usually 48 to 60 hours in advance of a winter storm. The outlook is issued when forecasters believe winter weather conditions are possible.

A blizzard warning is given for sustained or gusty winds of 35 miles per hour or more, and falling or blowing snow that limits visibility to one-fourth mile or less. These conditions should persist for at least three hours.

The wind chill is based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin caused by the combined effects of wind and cold. An advisory is issued when wind chill temperatures are expected to be between 20 degrees below 0 or colder. If temperatures are predicted to be 35 degrees below or colder, a wind chill warning is given.

When accumulations of snow, freezing rain, freezing drizzle and sleet cause significant inconvenience and moderately dangerous conditions, a winter weather advisory is issued.

Freezing rain falls on a surface with a temperature at or below freezing. Sleet is rain drops that freeze into ice pellets before reaching the ground. Both can cause damaging and dangerous ice accumulations.

Visit the UK Agricultural Weather Center at <http://www.agwx.ca.uky.edu> to find out more about winter weather and preparation for severe conditions.

UK Ag