The 2007 tobacco growing season started out dry in many areas and, other than a few sporadic rains, remained dry throughout the season. Areas with relatively poor soils were hit hardest along with late crops. Crops transplanted into fields that were turned late or where wheat or other crops were harvested prior to tillage were hardest hit. Many suffered from poor stands unless transplant quality was high, transplants were set deep or transplant water was sufficient for a good start. Differences in transplanting depth were often seen at harvest, where shallow set tobacco remained stunted from a poor start. Growers reported seeing differences between the carousel-type transplanter and the older finger setter, which tends to set deeper. However, finger setters require a good quality transplant for them to work successfully. In variety tests conducted at UK’s Coldstream Farm and on farms, slight differences in transplant quality were magnified by the extreme drought in 2007 resulting in stand loss and stunting in plants from all but the best transplants.

August is the month when tobacco needs rainfall to expand and produce a high-yielding crop. Unfortunately most of the state received only 1-2 inches of rainfall during August. Dry conditions prevailed on through the curing season producing a quick-cured crop with undesirable characteristics. Variegated or pie-bald tobacco was not necessarily the problem, but the overall color tended to be bright due to low humidity and quick curing conditions.

Black shank was ever present in many fields, but blue mold was not a significant threat due to the dry weather. New experimental varieties that will be available for 2008 show improvement for black shank control over current varieties.

Target spot was not as severe as in 2006 due to extreme drought conditions, but it remains a disease of concern for the future.

Weed pressure was high with more weed problems early due to the influence of dry conditions on herbicide performance. Some herbicides like Spartan have what is referred to as reach back potential, and fields receiving even moderate rainfall allowed the chemical to become active and control weeds that had developed. In a few cases, areas like ends of rows or turn rows that received too high a rate of Spartan developed crop injury after rainfall.

Sucker pressure was average, with those using a combination of MH and either Prime+ or Butralin reporting good to excellent control.

Timely and deep transplanting, adequate ground preparation and production of quality transplants can reduce some of the effects from drought. This publication is designed to provide the latest information for the production of high yielding, good quality tobacco. Contact your County Extension Service for more information and other supporting materials and publications.