

# Hot Weather And It's Affect On Mississippi Rice

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**T**his year was almost the perfect year for rice. The key word in that statement is almost.

Back in the spring we had conditions that were optimal for planting rice. This year's crop was planted at a record pace. By the end of April we had almost 75 percent of the Mississippi rice crop planted. Conditions early in the season were optimal for plant stands and weed control, which usually sets the table for high yields.

The hot temperatures in June accelerated rice maturity this year. We had rice that was heading in June, which was unbelievable. The above average temperatures through July and August continued to accelerate maturity. Harvest for some rice producers began around August 6, which once again was unbelievable.

Rice that was planted in March and the first half April resulted in good yields. This gave optimism that this year we would have average to above average yields. Looking back at prior history, our highest yields come from hot and dry conditions at heading. However, this year it was just too hot.

As we began harvesting rice that was planted at the last part of April and in May, rice yields

have significantly declined. Some field yields have come in lower than 100 bu/A. It has been a long time since we have seen field yields that low. This rice is not only low in yields, but test weights and milling as well.

Rice producers have been asking what happened and why the yields are so low. The short answer is heat. The high heat this year caused significant panicle blanking. I have never seen the whole panicle be nothing but blanks due to heat. A lot the rice that showing these symptoms was trying to pollinate when the temperatures were in excessive of 100 degrees during the day and barely getting in the 70's at night. These temperatures stayed at this high level for several days, which affected pollination day after day.

As we moved through harvest this year, rice yields varied greatly from field to field and within the same field. This mainly explained by where the crop was in terms of pollination to the extreme temperatures. It seems that only a few days could make the difference of 20 to 30 bu/A or more.

To say the least, this year's rice crop will be a big disappointment in terms of yield and price. Hopefully, everyone will survive this year to farm another year.  $\Delta$

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