

# Hot, Dry Weather Continues As Corn Begins Pollination

LEXINGTON, KY.

**W**ith much of the state's corn crop either beginning to or preparing to enter pollination, the weather continues to be hot and dry.

According to the June 25 Kentucky Weekly Crop and Weather Report, 29 percent of the state's corn crop has entered the silking stage and 50 percent has reached tasseling.

"While a single corn plant produces more pollen than the plant ever needs, the pollen is sensitive to hot, dry weather," said Chad Lee, extension grain crops specialist with the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture. "Silks also need good moist conditions to capture and transport pollen to fertilize the plant's ovules."

Fortunately, corn plants drop the majority of their pollen during the early mornings and late evenings when temperatures are not at their midday highs. However, midday temperatures in the 90s and above could cause pollination problems.

Lee added that corn requires around 0.3 inch of water per day during pollination, which is the most water it needs during the growing season.

"Lack of moisture could cause pollination problems and kernels to abort," he said.

Preliminary data for March, April and May indicate that Western Kentucky had the second driest spring on record. According to the Palmer Drought Severity Index released June 23, Western Kentucky is in an extreme drought with the rest of the state in a moderate drought.

It doesn't appear conditions are going to get much better any time soon, especially for Western Kentucky.

The eight- to 14-day weather forecast predicts above-normal temperatures and below-normal precipitation for the entire state, said Tom Priddy, UK agricultural meteorologist. In the 30-day forecast, that trend continues for Western Kentucky.

Some producers are considering switching some of their drought-stressed corn acreage to silage for livestock. Lee said now is the time to make that decision as farmers may need to harvest corn silage earlier than normal to maintain moisture levels plants need for fermentation.

Producers may also want to contact their crop insurance agent and keep in good communication with them as the crop progresses.

Lee said corn producers will have to wait a few weeks until the silks turn brown to look at the ears



to determine if pollination occurred and their yield potential.

Corn that has not reached the tasseling stage, still has good yield potential if the area receives timely rains to help with pollination and seed fill. Δ