



## WEATHER AND CROP CONDITIONS

 **J A N U A R Y** began with mild weather conditions and adequate precipitation in most localities. Mild weather conditions allowed livestock producers to graze their herds on available forage. Cattle and sheep exhibited mostly good to excellent body conditions. Temperatures began to drop as the month progressed, forcing livestock producers to provide supplemental feed to their herds. As the month ended, Virginia experienced above average amounts of snow and ice, making increased feeding of livestock a necessity. Many areas also received freezing rain and sleet.

# Monthly Weather

## Narratives



**F E B R U A R Y** began with snow cover being a problem for many producers who were feeding their livestock. However, cattle and sheep continued to show mostly good to excellent body conditions. Moderate temperatures and rain in mid February helped to improve soil moisture levels. A few small grain producers were able to begin top-dressing their crops. However, some producers were having trouble getting into fields due to wet conditions. Unseasonably warm weather at the end of the month caused many hay fields to green up. Ground conditions allowed applications of fertilizer and lime to some pastures and hayfields which reduced drought damage caused from the previous year.

**M A R C H** continued to show unseasonably warm temperatures. Many farmers were able to begin field work earlier than normal due to the favorable conditions. Small grains were showing lush growth. Some peach varieties that bloomed out early in the month were hit by frost but no heavy damage was reported. Much needed rains fell across the State mid-month. Grass began growing earlier than normal. Farmers began top dressing small grains and getting corn land ready. Vegetable producers were growing plants in greenhouses for transplanting. Strawberries remained covered for frost protection.

**A P R I L** rains and above normal temperatures improved small grain conditions in the beginning of the month, but delayed field preparation for tobacco and other row crops until mid-month. Many producers worked in between showers to prepare the land for planting. Nearly all the tobacco greenhouses and plantbeds had been seeded by the first of the month. Vegetable farmers continued to lay plastic and greenhouses began selling potted and bedded plants. Land preparation for soybeans and cotton began during the month. Snap beans and sweet corn fields were emerging in most areas. Producers were busy performing spring health maintenance on livestock and shearing sheep.



February began with snow cover being a problem for many producers

**M A Y** brought producer's a reprieve from April's wet weather. Hot and dry conditions allowed farmers to continue planting crops and begin their first hay cutting. Peanut and cotton producers took advantage of the warm, dry weather as both crops made substantial planting progress. Small grains were in good condition as the warmer, dryer weather cleared up some mildew problems. Flue tobacco transplanting was in full swing. By midmonth dry conditions were near ideal for making hay with quality and quantity both rated good. Flue tobacco transplanting progressed rapidly but slowed as drier field conditions developed. Crops that were planted needed rain desperately since fieldwork, wind and hot weather dried the soil. Rainfall in the last part of the month brought relief to stressed crops and improved soil moisture conditions throughout the State.

**J U N E** had rainy conditions for most of the month which slowed fieldwork. The flue cured tobacco belt received widespread rain which generally improved conditions. Hay cutting was still a major activity with most farmers reporting above average yields. Cotton planting was virtually complete. Farmers were anxious to finish planting so that the harvest of small grains and the planting of double cropped soybeans could begin. Midmonth weather conditions allowed farmers to finish planting cotton and get started on the harvest of wheat while continuing with barley harvest. Rain and winds in some areas caused barley and wheat to lodge, making harvesting more difficult. Good moisture levels allowed near ideal soil conditions for no-till soybeans. Severe thunderstorms moved across the state in late June bringing damaging hail to some northern localities. Small grain farmers were hoping for a few days of warm, dry weather so they could finish their harvest. Burley and dark fire tobacco growers continued transplanting as weather permitted.

**J U L Y** saw intermittent rainfall which delayed hay cutting and wheat harvest. Warm temperatures and high humidity increased disease problems in vegetables. Some worm pressure and square damage to cotton was reported. Warm and moist conditions midmonth improved topsoil moisture levels and provided excellent growing conditions. There were increased reports of blue mold spreading in burley tobacco, however all other tobacco types looked good. Tobacco harvest commenced and topping was in full swing. Persistent rainfall saturated the soil by month's end improving conditions of some crops and hurting conditions of others. Some hay farmers were complaining that they were losing their second cutting due to rot. Growth regulators were applied to cotton in some areas as weather permitted.

**A U G U S T** continued to be wet. Hay harvest came to a standstill in some areas causing quality to decline. There were continued reports of blue mold in tobacco. Flue-cured tobacco harvest got underway after a delayed start due to wet fields. Rains were starting to affect vegetables, especially cantaloupes and tomatoes. Vegetable harvest continued as farmers could get into fields. Peanut diseases were increasing and fungicide sprays were being applied. By mid-month frequent rains were causing fruit rot and leaf diseases in cantaloupes, watermelons, tomatoes and other vegetables. Burley tobacco harvest got underway while flue and fire harvests continued. Fall plantings of snap beans and cucumbers were delayed in areas where farmers could not get into the fields. At the end of the month topsoil moisture levels decreased slightly as temperatures increased and rainfall amounts declined. Disease pressure in peanuts continued to be a problem despite the continuous spraying and scouting efforts of growers. Field corn harvest began.

**S E P T E M B E R** weather allowed the corn harvest to continue. Harvest of all types of tobacco was over half complete statewide while flue marketing was well underway. Disease pressure in peanuts remained a concern as the cool damp weather caused conditions to worsen. By midmonth drier and warmer weather aided crop maturity. Corn harvest continued with excellent yields reported. Fall apple harvest continued, however disease pressure in both fall and winter apples was a concern. Defoliation of cotton began in some areas. Corn producers were recording excellent yields which was causing backups at some elevators. Harvested corn fields were being prepared for small grain planting. Winter wheat planting had begun in some areas by the end of the month. Cooler temperatures were delaying crop maturity. Late harvest of fall vegetables continued, however disease pressure due to excess moisture remained a problem. Cotton defoliation continued and a few areas reported that they were ready for harvest.

**O C T O B E R** saw better conditions which allowed many growers to advance their peanut harvest and caused cotton bolls to open. Grower's continued to proceed with the seeding of small grains in addition to getting their soybean and cotton harvests underway. Elevators around the state were struggling to find space for and keep up with the exceptional corn harvest. First frosts were reported in several areas which slowed growth of grasses. By the end of the month dry soils were becoming a concern for small grain establishments. Lack of rain was causing pastures to become depleted sooner than normal and growth of new plantings slowed. Corn harvest continued to be slow as bin space and barge movement continued to be a problem.

**N O V E M B E R** brought drier weather which caused topsoil conditions to decline. Fire hazards from farming operations were becoming a real concern in some areas. Orchards were being threatened in the Shenandoah National Park as fires continued to burn in Madison, Rappahannock, and Page counties. Electric fences, sparks from farm machinery and hunting activities were being closely monitored. Many producers stopped planting small grains due to dry soil conditions. Grain elevators in some areas were so full that producers stopped harvesting corn. Some elevators were beginning to store grain on the ground to make room for the new crop harvest. Showers across the Commonwealth later in the month helped to improve topsoil moisture. Some small grain planting continued as ground conditions allowed. Many farmers were switching back and forth between soybean and corn harvest depending on what crops the elevators in their area would take. Pasture depletion was reported due to the dry, cold weather. Burley and fire tobacco producers prepared crops for marketing. Rains over the long Thanksgiving holiday weekend helped to improve topsoil moisture conditions. Harvest of corn, soybeans, and cotton continued. Corn harvest remained slow due to lack of storage at grain elevators. The condition of the small grain crop improved with the rain. Producers were concerned that the late planted small grain crop might be damaged or not survive the cold weather conditions.

**D E C E M B E R** saw both the cotton and soybean harvests come to a close. Some corn fields remained unharvested as storage was in short supply. Lack of moisture in some areas and cold weather suppressed small grain development. The colder temperatures along with snow cover in some areas caused a more rapid use of the stored feed supply. Temperatures for the month were below normal. Snow covered some of the northern and western localities the last two weeks of the month. Many areas of the state received little to no rain or snow during the month and were in need of moisture.