

# agweather connection

<http://agweather.mesonet.org/> • Volume 2, Issue 9, September 07

## strike a match?

Burning unharvested wheat and wheat stubble is gaining popularity this year after a disastrous harvest.

"I live in northwest Oklahoma, in Burlington," said Keith Kisling, Oklahoma Wheat Commission board member. "We usually harvest about 1.3 million bushels. This year we harvested 300,000 bushels."

Much of Oklahoma's wheat crop went unharvested after heavy rains occurred throughout the summer. Kisling said the ground was so wet that it was hard to get equipment into the fields. In early August, another round of heavy rains prevented some farmers from preparing their ground for planting. Burning the wheat offered one solution.

"Ninety-five percent of farmers in my area burnt some of their wheat fields," said Kisling.

While burning is inexpensive and can help clear volunteer wheat, residue and weedy growth, producers should understand the consequences ahead of time.

"It is more economical to burn because it uses less fuel, and causes less wear and tear on equipment. But, you do

lose some of your nitrogen and you lose the straw, which forms humus [a natural compost used to improve the soil]," said Kisling.

Most farmers that are going to burn have already done so, said Kisling.

Tim Bartram of the Oklahoma Wheat Growers Association agrees; "I would think those that are going to burn have done so, but I saw a field being burned today. And, there are a lot of producers in Kansas that are waiting until right before planting. Some are starting to do 'cowboy' no-till which is burning late then planting direct with a conventional drill."

Burning late and planting directly into the burned ground can prevent some erosion, said Dr. Jeff Edwards, small grains specialist at Oklahoma State University. He said producers would need to use something heavier than a standard drill.

Edwards stressed the importance of understanding the many disadvantages of burning, such as the loss of nutrients, soil erosion, moisture concerns and soil quality issues.

### Advantages:

- Burning makes the ground easier to prepare for planting this fall.
- Growers who burn might consider drilling directly into burned ground rather than working the ground.
- Burning also removes the residue that may harbor disease.

### Disadvantages:

- Any nitrogen in the straw will be lost (this is likely a lot of N this year).
- The phosphorous will remain if the ashes remain. If the ashes blow away, so does the phosphorous.
- All organic matter in the residue is lost.
- Places a short-term gain above long-term soil tilth. Repeated burning is very damaging to soil long-term.
- Liability. What if the fire gets out of hand? What if someone drives into the smoke?

Note: This publication is not a proponent or opponent of controlled burning, nor does it assume any liability for the effects of a controlled burn.



# FEATURED PRODUCTS

by Laura Martin



## Free download

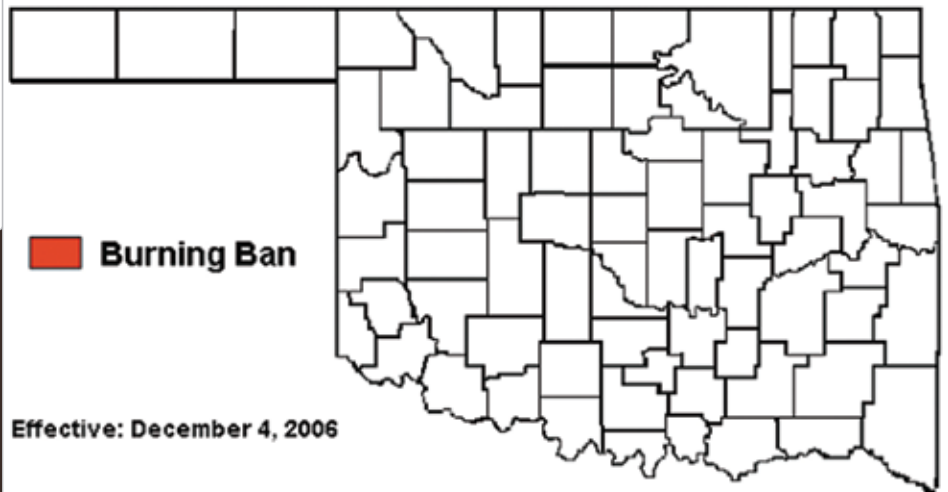
- Go to <http://aqweather.mesonet.org/>
- Download the WxScope Plugin
- For slow Internet connections, call (405) 325-3126 for a free CD
- [Click here for the Windows software](#)
- [Click here for the Macintosh software](#)

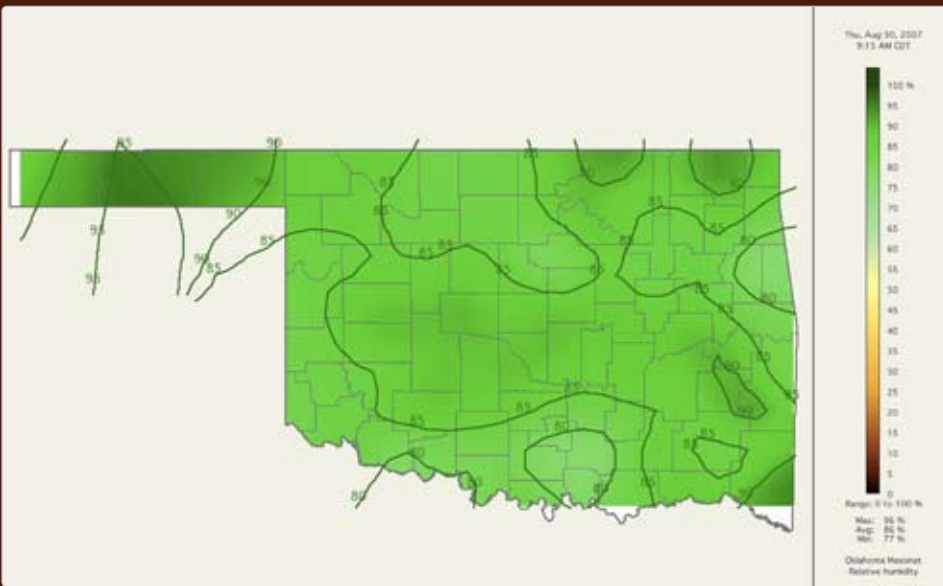
The screenshot shows the Agweather website interface. At the top is a navigation menu with icons and labels for WEATHER, SOIL, LIVESTOCK, RANGELAND, CROPS, HORTICULTURE, FORESTRY, and MARKETS. Below the menu is a banner image of a combine harvester with the text "WELCOME to the Agweather site!". To the right of the banner is a "WxScope Plugin 10 Required to use this site. Download here." message. A red box highlights a "WxScope Plugin 10" button with a "Download Now" link. Further right is a section titled "Weather-Related Products for Agriculture and Natural Resources Management" with descriptive text and a "Download Now" link. At the bottom right is an "Add the Agweather Link to Your Site" section with a logo and a link to <http://aqweather.mesonet.org>. The footer contains copyright information: "Copyright © 2003-2006 Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma, All Rights Reserved. [webmaster@mesonet.org](mailto:webmaster@mesonet.org)".

## Burn ban

- Go to <http://aqweather.mesonet.org/>
- Click on "Rangeland"
- Select "Red Flag Fire Alert"
- Click the green "Red Flag Fire Alert" button

## Use Caution when burning anything outdoors.





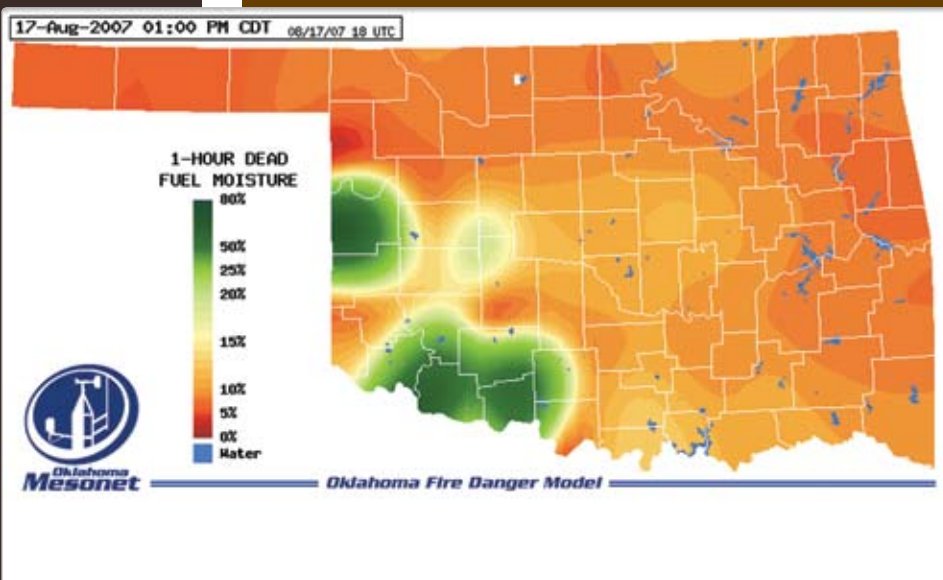
## Relative humidity

- Go to <http://aqweather.mesonet.org/>
- Click on "Current Weather"
- Select "Humidity"
- Choose "Contour Relative Humidity"



## Wind speed

- Go to <http://aqweather.mesonet.org/>
- Click on "Rangeland"
- Select "Fire Danger Model"
- Choose "Wind"
- Select "2-meter Wind Speeds"



## Fuel moisture

- Go to <http://aqweather.mesonet.org/>
- Click on "Rangeland"
- Select "Fire Danger Model"
- Choose "Fire Danger Maps"
- Select the "1-hr Dead Fuel Moisture"

# safety **FIRST**

Call the Sheriff's Department and report your burn.

Be conscientious about burning by roadways.

It is important to follow a few guidelines ensure safety during controlled burns. • Relative humidity should be between 30 percent and 60 percent. • One-hour dead fuel moisture should be 10 percent to 15 percent. Burning may not be possible with 1-hour dead fuel moisture greater than 20 percent because the fuels are too wet to burn. • Wind speeds should range from 5 to 10 miles per hour. There should be some wind so the fire can spread. • Consider possible sensitive areas downwind (hospitals, neighborhoods) in case smoke might be carried in those directions. • Make sure there are no major wind direction shifts expected during the course of the burn. A steady wind direction helps keep the main fire moving in the same direction.

Disc a 10-foot buffer around your burn area. It contains the fire and gives it a boundary.

Don't burn on a windy day. Winds should be less than 10 miles per hour.

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