New England Agricultural Statistics Service

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United States Department of Agriculture

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Maine Wild Blueberries

July 2004

July 30, 2004

A special "THANK YOU" goes to approximately 400 Maine Wild Blueberry growers and processors who have helped us by completing the wild blueberry survey during July.

SIGNIFICANT DROP IN WILD BLUEBERRY CROP EXPECTED

Maine's 2004 wild (lowbush) blueberry crop is expected to total 52.0 million pounds, based on grower reported condition of the crop through mid-July. This forecast would place total production 35 percent below last year's output of 80.4 million pounds, and 17 percent below 2002 final production.

Growers reported that crop prospects are below average this year due to a number of factors. Extreme cold temperatures and inadequate snow cover led to significant winter kill on the 2004 wild blueberry crop. Cool and rainy weather during the spring of 2004 caused poor, spotty pollination in many areas. Mummy berry is prevalent for the third consecutive year. Growers reported fungicides had limited effect in combating the disease.

Rains during July increased berry size and improved plant strength in some locations.

MAINE WILD BLUEBERRIES: Production and Value, 1994 - 2004

Year	Total Production	All Price per Pound [1/]	Total Value of Production [1/]	Fresh Blueberries [2/]			Blueberries for Processing		
				Production	Price per Pound	Value of Production	Production	Price per Pound	Value of Production
	1,000 Pounds	Cents	1,000 Dollars	1,000 Pounds	Dollars	1,000 Dollars	1,000 Pounds	Cents	1,000 Dollars
1994	59,495	30	17,744	350	--	--	59,145	30	17,744
1995	65,944	32	21,004	305	--	--	65,639	32	21,004
1996	59,198	57	33,590	268	--	--	58,930	57	33,590
1997	73,816	43	31,622	276	--	--	73,540	43	31,622
1998	62,981	46	29,166	360	1.00	360	62,621	46	28,806
1999	66,102	51	33,889	300	1.10	330	65,802	51	33,559
2000	110,990	40	44,732	420	1.20	504	110,570	40	44,228
2001	75,200	31	22,945	350	1.40	490	74,850	30	22,455
2002	62,400	29	17,860	400	1.25	500	62,000	28	17,360
2003	80,400	36	28,540	400	1.35	540	80,000	35	28,000
2004 [3/]	52,000	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

[1/] All Price per Pound and Total Value of Production for 1994 - 1997 do not include fresh market blueberries.
[2/] Fresh Blueberry Price per Pound and Value of Production are not available before 1998.
[3/] Current year production forecast is based on growers' assessments as of mid-July.

Wild Blueberry Comments 2004 by County, As Reported On The Grower Survey

CUMBERLAND, KENNEBEC, OXFORD: Winter damage, flea beetle, and no blooms in most of the field. Moderate winter injury observed, berries look small, some blossoms end, mummy berry noted. Starting to get mummy berries, have lots of turkeys in field, overall conditions of field improved over last three years. Heavy winter damage, large insect problem. Little snow cover coupled with sub-zero temperatures and strong northwest winds in January, destroyed nearly 90 percent of fruit buds for this crop. I expect animal and bird (turkeys, crows) damage to what few berries remain. No snow; some tip damage; very short plants; worst pollination weather imaginable. Lost a lot to winter kill. Berries medium size, plenty of moisture; now expect insect problems. Wet spring, and wet weather during pollination. Bees had a lot of cold and wet weather during pollination. Season looks to be below average. **HANCOCK:** Winter damage appears to be considerable in 2004, and a rainy spring prevented the bees from full time work. Crop looks bad this year. Wet foggy weather during bloom. Bees could not work. Tops of most plants winter killed. Severe blight. Poor prospects. A cold winter and very wet spring produced a light bloom and kept bees from working. Moisture is adequate but I expect a reduced crop in this area for 2004. Extreme winter kill and cold damage due to lack of snow cover. Adequate moisture. Moderate mummy berry disease (not treated with fungicide) minimal insect problems. Huge winter kill; no snow and unusual cold and rainy spring. Maybe 10 percent winter kill; blossom blight and fungus; very few berries, but what few we have are better in quality. Winter kill, too open and cold. Deep frost. Cold and damp during pollination. Blossom blight, mummy berry, very wet May and June for poor pollination. Winter damage. To cool for bees to pollinate. Doing some picking of the berries for sale by road-side to maintain the fields. General prospects - crop great, market sour. Didn't think this year's crop would be good. Crop looks ok. Frosted June 1, lost blossoms (light frost), heavy rains and cold during pollination period. The spring was too cold. Heat in 2003, no coverage of snow in winter of 2003/04. No snow cover; plants look good despite cold winter. Pollination reduced due to cold/rain. Weather hurt crop - no sun. Very light crop. Berries look bad/spotty/small/white. Doesn't look like a good crop, not very good pollination due to rain. Winter kill renders the field not worth harvesting. Not much more than 25 percent of a normal crop, average is 4,000 pounds/acre. Looks terrible this year; awfully small, way behind, still green a lot of winter kill, frost, not enough snow. No sun, bad winter. **KNOX:** A lot of mummy berry. Considerable winter kill because of little snow and severe wind chill. Rainfall slightly below normal; some blight but little insect damage. Ripening fast. Looking good. Fruit fly may be a problem. A lot of blight; some winter damage. Some saw-fly presence on adjacent field that is non-bearing. Do not expect crop to be as large as in past couple of years. Light winter damage and some mummy berry damage. Fields do not look good. Wet spring, no bees. Monilinia Blight disease hurt much of the crop, too. Did not have much winter kill and they didn't have a good pollination season either. No snow cover last winter; too much rain and not much pollination this spring hurt the crop. Quite a lot of winter kill and mummy berry damage. Expect some blight damage from damp cold weather. This year's crop needs sun. The pollination was bad this year because of the cold and wet weather. Very cold weather; little snow. Very little sun for pollination; a lot of rain and cold. Winter damage high -- at least 30 percent plus disease high and insect low on most fields, some fields over 50 percent. Quality appears good at this time; too cold and wet during pollination; was dry for a while in June; recent rain given adequate moisture for now. Thinks the crop will be about one-third less than what he in 2002. Monilinia Blight and cool damp weather during pollination; hail on July 2; span worm patches; what else could go wrong? Very light winter damage, good moisture, no insect problems, extreme mummy berry disease. Winter injury reduced crop 10 - 25 percent. Monilinia blight reduced crop 5- 15 percent. Pollination was poor due to weather. Fields and vines were very wet and cold during the months of June and July. Pollination was poor because of weather. Expect harvest yield will be below that obtained in year 2002 for the same fields. Reasons due to poor pollination and winter kill. Had cold spell of windy winter weather on bare ground resulting in winter kill in some areas. Also, cold, wet, spring resulted in blight and poor pollination. Said that this year is poor. The spring was bad and because of all the rain the bees didn't come out, but the berries are on the large side. No snow cover; very dry 2003 summer. Rain, fog during pollination so spotty pollination. Bumble bees work well resulting in some area good fruit set. We really had problem with mummy berry, a wet spring causing problems for the bees to work. We looked at the field on July 4th and there was not one blue berry so they will be late to ripen and they look very small. Poor pollination weather. **LINCOLN:** Cold spring affecting pollination. Have one patch of berries that look beautiful, yet another patch right beside it with hardly a berry on it. It looks like a very poor year. The crop will be 20 percent less than a normal year. 2003 was a burn year. No blueberries harvested. 2004 crop was frosted. Spotty set; there has been a lot of new growth on top of the bushes, so harvest will be a challenge. Prospects are extremely poor; heavy winter kill; poor pollination due to wet weather. **PENOBSCOT, PISCATAQUIS, WALDO:** Things seem to be about average. There was extensive winter damage from inadequate snow cover and cold January temperatures. Pollination weather was poor. Winter kill, mummy berries and a poor pollination period. Cold spring and winter hasn't done well, killing back on plant My fields are spotty. One looks good and the other spotty. Very wet and muddy here. Moisture to date plentiful; pollination reason poor but normal; bees on site a week late; mummy berry heavy crop loss about 15 percent some thrip present; some winter damage. We had a lot of winter kill, mummy berry, and span worm. Feels like we have less than half a crop. Looks real bad. Cold winter not enough snow cover when bee's should have been out pollinating it was wet and cold. The blossom was average. Then we had frost this spring, damaging the flowers and they fell off. Some bushes have no berries at all. Blight damage; rain during pollination.

Patchy frost kill; plenty of rain in June. Very little winter damage but enough to keep the bloom a little below heavy. Very good pollination. Good amount of rain so far. Not much indication of disease. Do not know about insects yet, but it has never been very bad. The prospects are very good. Winter damage from light snow cover and cold temperatures. Bad pollination season, with cold and damp conditions. Light blossom and general prospects does not look good. Mummy berry prevalent; good pollination; I see the effects of too much moisture. A typical year. Many operations were skipped because of health problems. Sprayed late because of soft surface. Looking poor; 40 percent less than a normal year. Damage due to lack of snow and extreme cold last winter. Spring had bad pollination season due to the rainy weather. There was winter kill on those areas open to the northerly winds. There will probably be half of what there was two years ago if I can keep the wild Turkeys out. **WASHINGTON:** We had extensive winter damage and some blossom blight. Weather was not good for pollination. We have had adequate moisture and now need sun here. Insect damage is slight. Poor weather for pollination. Moisture good, but too wet for bees to work. Heaviest winter damage in over 40 years of growing. Lots of moisture which caused lots of fungus. Very poor weather for pollination; wet and cold. Looks like the poorest crop ever! Ten percent winter damage. Average crop. Too much moisture. Actually, the crop is very hard to judge at this time. The blossoms were between something and nothing. Blight problems and poor pollination due to cold, wet spring. Major winter damage. Plenty of moisture. Some mummy berries. The season will be two weeks behind. Very light pollination. Winter injury and disease will reduce crop to less than 40 percent of average. Some blight. A lot of clover. Large amount of damage due to blight, also bushes small due to lack of moisture. Severe winter damage plus three light frosts in lowland got what few blossoms that were on the bushes. Spotty crop; a lot of winter damage; cold and not much snow cover. Poor crop this year; too small to harvest. No problems at this juncture. Due to lack of snowfall, winter damage was heavy. At pollination time, weather was wet and cold preventing bees from working during bloom time. There was a problem with pollination, winter kill, and the bears. Winter kill, some blight, weeds and grass. Winter kill and too cold. Substantial winter damage. Too wet during pollination. Winter was bad. Bees didn't come out to pollinate and increased amount of Blight disease because of all the rain. Winter kill reduced one field by 70 percent of its fruit buds. Widespread mummy berry infection. Open winter kill. Poor pollination; may not harvest. Much blight; no insects this year. Cold winter, no snow, cold wet spring. We have a problem of mummy berry spreading through the field this year. Angel hair grass is spreading from surrounding grower's fields. Cold winter, no snow, wet spring, poor pollination. Winter took a toll, plus wet weather and a lot of blight. A lot of winter damage; plants above the snow got hit hard. A lot early blight; a lot of weeds this year. The lack of snow this winter hurt this years crops. Moderate winter kill due to poor snow cover. Too much winter kill; too much rain, no sun, no bees. Lot of winter damage and poor pollination. There was much winter damage and a bad pollination. Median quality of berries, average moisture. Mummy berry 20 percent. Severe winter damage. Lost over half the crop. Bad winter damage, lot of disease. Really bad year; no sun; too much rain; a lot of winter kill; poor pollination. Some blight. Mummy berry and blight damage. No snow cover last winter. Cold spring. 30 percent winter kill. To early to estimate the size of the berries. To early to say quality of berries. Good available moisture. Few disease and insect problems. General prospects about average. Just a little bit of winter kill. Optimistic. Berries are slow to ripen. A lot of winter kill and a lot of blight. Crop looks like due to poor pollination. Mummy berry severe. Cold wet weather during pollination. Bumble bees were only ones working. A lot of winter kill, poor pollination, cold wet spring. Winter damage was bad. Too much rain. Expecting poor prospects. Looking like a bad year, cold wet spring, bees weren't pollinating. Severe winter kill and mummy berry. Tiny berries, spotty growth. Heavy blight and mummy berries. Real small crop in Maine. General prospects, looking about average. Low pollination, too cool and wet. I had notable winter damage. Very poor pollination season. A lot of winter damage, very wet, berries are small. Poor pollination; some mummy berry. Bloom heavy, set of fruit are heavy and size of berry are large. There may be a little winter kill and everyone says lots of blight. So far, lots of rain. Insect problems are very light. Cold wet spring, poor pollination. I did have 30 percent winter damage and we had very poor weather for pollination. I also have some botrytis on my crop. Rainfall should swell berries up as we have had plenty of rain. Too much rain... Winter kill; fields are two weeks behind, lack of pollination; too wet for too long; disease; mummy berry. Extreme winter injury, bud counts indicate 37-80 percent damage, very poor pollination, poor weather for bees. Extensive winter injury (guess) 35-50 percent. Cold, wet weather during pollination. Suspect that plants passed fertility before bees got cooperative weather. Looking really bad, poor pollination year. Winter kill at 25 percent. Good moisture. Excessive winter injury. Excessive blight and disease. Crop down 40 percent from average. Too much rain this spring and the bad winter hurt much of his wild blueberry crop. Severe winter kill expected to reduce crop.

The wild blueberry estimating program is funded through a cooperative agreement with the Maine Department of Agriculture as a service to growers and others in the industry. The next Maine Wild Blueberry report will be published and available on the Internet at http://www.nass.usda.gov/nh/ in late January 2005. It will contain the final production statistics for the 2004 crop as collected by the Maine Department of Agriculture.