



MAGUIRES TOBACCO GROWERS GUIDE

As Recommended by the Tobacco Research Board

Please remember to always read the label before using any chemical



TOPPING AND SUCKERING

TOPPING

The importance of bud topping in improving yield, percentage of leaf grades and nicotine content of the leaf cannot be over-emphasized. Equally important is to complete the task of topping in a particular field in as short a time as possible. All too frequently the early topping is done well, but the land is only closed out 3 to 4 weeks later. On an even land the task should be completed in 7 days, while if the crop is not even, topping should be completed in 10 to 14 days, meaning that the smaller plants should be topped at a lower leaf number.

- Aim to top at between 18 and 20 leaves. The more vigorous the plant the higher the leaf number. The lowest leaf that should be counted is the first reappable leaf, i.e. the first true priming. If the crop has been primed, suggest aim at no more than 18 leaves, the first leaf being the lowest remaining on the plant after priming. However, if the crop is unusually vigorous, top one or two leaves higher.
- Topping may be done by leaf count but is slow and often inaccurate if labour is not well trained. This approach to topping is often the reason why the operation is completed late.
- When 10% of plants have reached the 18-leaf stage, cut a measuring stick to the height of the shortest plant at this stage. Measuring the stick to height of the bud is difficult. The 3 or 4 leaves that surround the bud leaves are all of the same height when these leaves are held vertically. These provide a suitable measurement for the stick size. Place the stick on the ridge between the plants and mark the height to the top of the leaves of the plant selected as ready for topping and cut the stick to this size. Cut as many sticks as necessary to issue to each topping worker and ensure that the foreman has one as well.
- Bud topping is best done using a measuring stick.
 - As the plant grows bud leaves tend to fall away from the bud once they reach 3cm to 5cm in length.
 - When the 18th leaf on standard varieties falls away the bud can be removed without damaging the leaf.
 - Count leaves from the first true reappable leaf (do not include seedbed leaves).



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- Top all plants that are at this height and above, removing the bud.
- Note that for each topping round, the measuring stick may need to be changed as the plant develops, check this before each operation.

SUCKER CONTROL

- When bud topping, it is risky to apply the full rate of N-decanol or local systemic (pendimethalin – Accotab) over the topped plant, the top leaves will be burnt or distorted.
- Growers who favour an N-decanol/Acrobat mix will need to apply the suckeride on a leaf axil below the top to avoid damage and then apply a smaller amount of the mix over the top when the next round of topping is done. The squeeze bottle method suits this approach.
Unfortunately if not done correctly, leaf axils are often missed.
- N-Decanol may be poured over the top if diluted to 1:50-70. Experiment with the rate and apply that that burns the suckers but does least damage to the top leaves. As a general rule the more rapidly the plant is growing, the more dilute the suckeride should be. When poured over the top there is less chance that axils are missed.
- When diluted to this rate, effectiveness is reduced to 7 to 10 days.
- There are 2 options:
 - a. Repeat the dilute rate on every plant until topping is complete (no plant should receive more than 3 doses)
 - b. Apply the full rate of N-Decanol (1:25) on all plants topped the previous week, by this stage the top leaves will have development sufficiently to avoid damage.
- A week after topping is completed, apply a local systemic to all plants.
- If experience has indicated that late suckers are a problem, repeat the local systemic treatment 2 weeks later.
- Regardless of efficiency, misses always occur. Remove these by hand as early as possible, treating the axil using a sponge or some other suitable appliance with Accotab.
- If topping when there is a threat of rain around, it is good practice to mix a sticker with the suckeride.