

Sap situation no better in Prince Edward County

Posted By Stephen Petrick

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Freezing mid-March weather is causing sap to run slowly in Prince Edward County.

"We've had a little bit running, but it froze before we could do anything with it," said Colleen Nyman, who runs J&C Nyman Farms with her husband, John, near Picton.

"We've usually boiled at least once by the end of February."

Nyman is worried that many syrup farmers won't have much product to show off by the time the Maple in the County festival takes place in Prince Edward County March 29 to 30.

"It will run at some point, but it may not be as long as we want it to be," she said.

March usually marks the start of maple syrup season, as freezing temperatures at night, mixed with above-zero conditions in the day, allow sap to begin flowing from maple trees.

Producers say a fluctuation from about minus -6 to 6 degrees can create a handsome harvest.

The Nymans aren't the only ones praying for more of those days in the second half of the syrup season.

"It's going pretty slow because it's too cold," said Doug Stone of Stone's Maple Producers, another sugar bush just outside Picton.

He said if conditions are perfect for the whole season, a tree can produce enough sap to make a litre of syrup but he's not expecting that this year, saying if the weather improves he might have an average season, which means the 1,000 trees on his site will produce 500 to 600 litres.

Todd Vader, who runs Vader Maple Syrup in the southern part of the county, said he hasn't been hurt by bad weather as much as other farmers in the area. He has boiled syrup four times already this year - enough to make 450 litres.

He believes temperatures in the south end of the county have been more ideal.

"One or two degrees can make a difference," he said. "Our main bush is just a mile from Lake Ontario so we tend to get earlier runs."

Other producers were just getting ready to collect sap late last week, unsure about how a late start to the season will affect their crop.

Janice Hubbs, who runs Hubbs Sugarbush with her husband, Ron, in the northern part of the county, said 90 per cent of trees on her property have now been tapped but cold weather and thick snow has them well behind schedule this year.