

There was a little boy that always took his teacher raisins. When he didn't bring any one day his teacher

# Raisin growers wary of rain

Too much moisture could ruin crop, which requires high heat to dry.

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Kern raisin growers are keeping a wary eye on the sky this week, wondering if those dark clouds hovering over their crops will burst or pass them by.

More than a quarter inch or so of rain could cause serious problems for local growers, who count on sunshine and hot temperatures to field-dry Kern's \$4.9 million raisin crop. Growers will finish their harvest within the next couple of weeks.

Lamont grower Lynn Reade said raisin growers always worry about rain, which can lead to a crop-destroying mold and mildew.

"It's part of the risk of making raisins," Reade said. "We have to figure out just the right time to lay down — the longer you wait, the more sugar you get in the raisins."

Reade said this week's light sprinkling of rain did no harm to his 240-acre crop, but clouds and cooler temperatures promise to lengthen the drying process.

"It's so cold the raisins won't dry," he said. "You need 95-degree heat to really dry them. Hopefully we'll get more sunshine next week."

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thought he was mad at her so she asked, "Are you mad at me, you stopped bringing me raisins?" The boy said, "Noma'am I'm not mad, my rabbit died."

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The threat of rain is a concern for growers already beleaguered by historically low prices. Reade expects to produce about 600 tons of raisins this year for about \$850 per ton.

"Two or three years ago they were going for about \$1,200 per ton," he said.

"Prices are as low now as they've been in the 25 years I've been here."

Grape crops are less effected by recent sprinkles because they're sheltered under a protective canopy. UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor Jennifer Hashim said grape growers don't get too worried until it rains hard

enough to penetrate the canopy.

"Then we could have a rot problem," Hashim said. "Some farmers apply a preventative fungicide before it rains or a copper sulfur dust after, to dry up any rot."

Temperatures are expected to start climbing by Monday.

**RAISINS:** Prices haven't been this low in 25 years, some say