

Feature Story



Prevailing over potato pests

Curtis Rainbolt, BASF Technical Service Representative, gives growers advice for pest management

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC, November 21, 2017 — Despite a late start this year, most potato growers faced minimal disease pressures and powered through harvest with good qualities and yields. Now that 2017 is coming to an end, attention must be turned to the possibility of diseases and pesky weeds in 2018. With a little planning, these challenges can be avoided to lay the foundation for another impressive year.

“After the long harvest, hopefully growers will get time for a well-deserved break,” said Curtis Rainbolt, BASF Technical Service Representative. “After that, it’s never too early to begin working on a pest management plan.”

The first step in formulating a successful plan is to identify where problem areas may exist.

“In an ideal situation, growers can use past field records and the rotation crop history to determine which fields might be the most susceptible to plant disease and weed problems,” said Rainbolt.

When it comes to managing pests, timing is critical. That is why planning ahead of the season, versus reacting to conditions, can help growers make effective applications.

“Weeds and plant diseases are always easiest to control before they become established,” Rainbolt said. “Having a plan in place before planting will make sure that the best pest fungicides and herbicides go on at the perfect time.”

While timing is of the utmost importance, choosing the right product for the job is equally as important.

“Using quality fungicides and preemergence herbicides are the best way to avoid an outbreak,” notes Rainbolt.

A common disease in potatoes is soil-borne *Rhizoctonia* — a fungus that attacks tubers, underground stems and stolons. It commonly occurs when weather is cold and wet in the weeks following planting. When applied in furrow, a fungicide such as Priaxor® fungicide would be very effective against *Rhizoctonia* at planting. It has two active ingredients that protect potatoes from a wide range of diseases.

Soon after planting, but before emergence, is the ideal time to apply herbicides. The best way to attack weeds is to diversify herbicide treatments. A tank mix of two herbicides, such as Prowl® H2O and Outlook® herbicides, helps control a wide spectrum of weed species, including nightshades, lambsquarters, pigweeds and many others.

“Once weeds are established in the potato crop, there are limited options to selectively remove them,” Rainbolt said. “Using a fungicide in furrow at planting and an herbicide shortly thereafter is a very effective way to get potato plants off to a quality disease-free start.”

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After all, a solid foundation typically results in a very strong finish.

For questions related to BASF's Potato Portfolio, contact your local representative or visit www.agproducts.basf.com.

Always read and follow label directions.

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