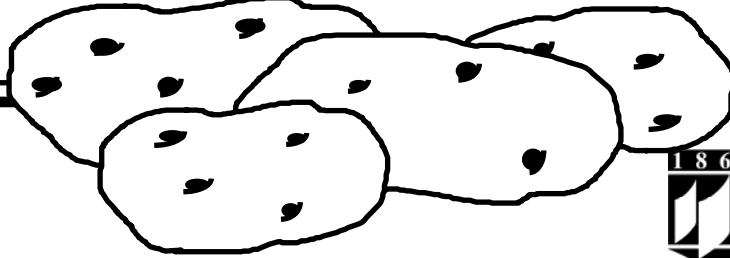


# SPUDLINES



MARCH 2006  
VOL. 44 NO. 1

1865 THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**MAINE**  
Cooperative Extension

Dear Potato Grower,

This is the first issue of SPUDLINES for 2006 with another issue scheduled in April/May. In this issue, articles are presented on the seed and seed handling. I want to put in a push for Maine seed. The virus levels are in the range of that of last year's crop. This and the risk of importing late blight or worse, should make buying Maine seed an easy choice. Skip Babineau reports on Cost Share Payments That May Benefit Potato Growers Using Integrated Pest Management Practices and Terry L. Bourgoin reports on Maine's 2006 Post Harvest test results.

Sincerely,

Steven B. Johnson, Ph.D.  
Crops Specialist

**This publication is in part supported by a grant from the Educational Committee of the Maine Potato Board. The potato growers, processors and brokers of Maine pay assessments. Portions of these assessments were approved for the educational purpose of keeping Maine potato growers and related Maine industry people informed.**

Have you visited our NEW website?

<http://www.umaine.edu/umext/potatoprogram/>

Have you visited our NEW website?

## Upcoming Programming of Interest

**March 24**                      **Maine Potato Board Annual Meeting**  
Presque Isle Inn and Convention Center, Presque Isle

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## **POTATO DISEASE AND FORECASTING INFORMATION DELIVERY HARMONIZED ACROSS INTERNATIONAL BORDERS WITH IMPACT** (International Maine Maritime Potato AAction Team)

Steven B. Johnson, Ph.D.  
Extension Crops Specialist

Potato late blight is caused by *Phytophthora infestans*, a pathogen that is unrivaled in the widespread misery and despair it has caused. Maine and abutting Canadian provinces experienced potato late blight epidemics through most of the 1990s that affected a good portion of the 110,000 potato acres in the region. Potatoes are the main cash crop in the region so crop losses are not offset by other farm income. Some years proved to be more devastating than others. The late blight epidemic during the 2004 crop season was particularly damaging, with over 9 million dollars paid out of Farm Service Agency crop disaster funds for the crop season.

While late blight has long been recognized as a community plant disease, the importance of harmonizing the region as a community to attack the spread of late blight has only recently been recognized. The areas within the region compete in the same seed, table stock, and processing markets. In the past, late blight did not stop at international political boundaries but

the transfer of information did.

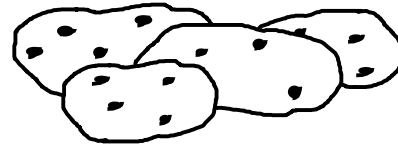
The similar potato production issues and concerns fueled by late blight helped spawn the formation of IMMPACT (International Maine Maritime Potato ACtion Team) in December 2004. To our knowledge this effort is a first in cooperation for information delivery. The working group was formed with stakeholder representation from Maine and the Canadian Province of New Brunswick. Members included representatives from the Maine Potato Board; Potatoes New Brunswick; the Agricultural Bargaining Council; the Maine Seed Potato Board; the New Brunswick Seed Potato Growers Association; the Maine Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources; the New Brunswick Seed Potato Growers Association Agricultural Certification Services; University of Maine Cooperative Extension; the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture; McCain Foods USA; and McCain Foods Canada.

The meetings, chaired by the respective commodity group representatives, focused on collaboration to effectively deliver late blight control information. As a result of the effort, 35 weather stations were purchased, installed, and operated in Canada with the same late blight prediction software as used on 17 identical weather stations in Maine. The same regulated date for mandatory covering of cull piles was used on both sides of the border. Reporting of disease locations was changed to township/parish to be consistent in Maine and in New Brunswick. A Web site was developed to (<http://www.potatoimmpact.com/index.htm>) provide consistent bilingual late blight resources. A listserv e-mail list was established to rapidly deliver information to those supporting the potato industry in the region. Additionally, designated media contacts within the group were identified for scientific and public outreach. All these efforts have served to harmonize outreach activity.

During the 2004 growing season, reports were issued to the e-mail list biweekly on the status of the crop and the late blight potential. Maine issued 33 reports and New Brunswick issued 29 reports. To avoid commercial use of the system, only a few selected people were permitted to post information to the list server. Articles specific to critical crop and disease control stages were written and published locally. Late blight presence and disease forecasts were put on the evening television news biweekly.

While late blight did occur on both sides of the border during the 2005 crop season, those associated with the industry credit outreach efforts, including IMMPACT, with keeping the disease from escalating out of control. Moreover, communication was enhanced for all parties involved. Although still competitors in markets, the Maine and New Brunswick potato industries need each other for infrastructure and critical mass in the global market. The taboos of the past have been laid to rest and scientific communication and real-time data sharing during the season has been initiated. Those directly involved with IMMPACT benefited greatly from the association and increased communication. The real winners in the late blight situation are those receiving better, timelier information about the current situation on both sides of the

border. Improved information delivery to clients improves the situation for everyone involved. We not finished with late blight in Maine, or elsewhere for that matter. However, we are moving closer to being finished with insufficient information for our clients.



## POTATO CHIPS ARE BIG BUSINESS

William J. Lamont, Jr., Ph.D.  
Professor of Horticulture  
The Pennsylvania State University

According to Frito-Lay, the nation's largest chip manufacturer, they must increase production in the weeks leading up to the SuperBowl by more than 10 million pounds of chips just to meet the demand for this viewing event. Add that to a normal week's consumption and, according to ACNielsen Scantrack, that makes the chip business in U.S. supermarkets worth over \$2.7 billion each year. Total sales, in all outlets everywhere in the U.S., including places like convenience stores, deli's and ballparks, top \$6 billion! The U.S. potato chip industry alone employs more than 65,000 people.

In 2004, Americans consumed over 1.85 billion pounds of chips as the potato chip officially celebrated its 150th birthday, and while today there are hundreds of brands and varieties lining the supermarket shelves, it is still the "plain" potato chip that remains the sales leader, capturing over 80 percent of sales.

The potato chip hasn't changed all that much since it was first invented back in 1853 by a cook named George Crum in Saratoga Springs, New York. Crum, who was part Indian, part African-American, worked at the Moon Lake Lodge, and according to folklore, didn't much care for customers who complained and sent their food back to the kitchen. One such customer, reportedly Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, sent back his dinner complaining that the standard, thick-cut French style fries that were popularized in France in the 1700s and brought to the United States by Thomas Jefferson (when he returned from his stint as ambassador to that country) were too thick for his liking and sent back the order. Crum then cut and fried a thinner batch, but Vanderbilt once again complained, and sent these fries back to the kitchen. As was his manner, Crum decided to get even with the unknown guest, and prepared French fries that were too thin and crisp to skewer with a fork.

Supposedly, Vanderbilt loved the browned, paper-thin potatoes, and as fate would have it, other diners requested Crum's potato chips, which he called potato crunches, and they soon appeared on the menu as Saratoga Chips, the house specialty. This led to Crum opening his own restaurant on the lake in Saratoga Springs, called Crum's House, which was

## MAINE'S 2006 POST HARVEST TEST RESULTS

Terry L. Bourgoin, Director  
Division of Plant Industry  
Maine Department of Agriculture

financed by four men including Vanderbilt. Crumb called his signature dish "potato crunches" and placed them in baskets on all the tables. He also marketed them for takeout in boxes as "Saratoga Chips" but, not realizing the importance of his creation, neither patented nor otherwise protected his invention.

Potato chip mass production is credited first to William Tappendon of Cleveland, Ohio in 1895. He began making chips in his kitchen and delivered them to neighborhood grocery stores; he later created one of the first potato chip factories in a converted barn in his backyard.

The early 1900s gave birth to a number of companies that helped define the potato chip industry. Leominster Potato Chip Company was founded in 1908. In 1910, Daniel Mikesell and his wife started Mike-sell's in Dayton, Ohio. Dan Dee Pretzel and Potato Chip Company (1913), Num Num (1918), and Blue Bell (1919) followed. In Pennsylvania, Wise Potato Chips was founded in 1921 when Earl Wise, Sr. decided to make potato chips out of the excess potatoes at his Berwick, Pennsylvania delicatessen. That same year Bill and Salie Utz founded Utz Quality Foods in Hanover, Pennsylvania and Magic City Food Company (which later became Golden Flake Snack Foods) opened in Birmingham, Alabama. In 1932, Herman Lay, a traveling salesman in the South, founded Lay's in Nashville, Tennessee, which distributed potato chips from a factory in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1938, Lay purchased the chip factory and Lay's Brand Potato Chips was born. An industry was launched. Potato chips have become America's favorite snack. But it was the invention of the mechanical potato peeler and continuous fryer, both in 1929, that moved potato chips from a local small specialty item to the nation's top-selling snack. In 1926, Laura Scudder started her potato chip company in California, and developed the wax paper bag to pack her chips to preserve their freshness and crispiness, making possible a wider distribution area. At about the same time, Herman Lay helped bring potato chips from Atlanta to Tennessee. Lay sold his chips to Southern grocers out of the trunk of his car, building the first successfully marketed national brand of chips. He is also credited with the invention of the mechanical potato chip peeler.

Today, the trends driving chips include more flavors, less fat and calories, reduced carbs, organic, and—much like the trends in wine, beer, and coffee—a return to the basics with a number of hand-made, kettle-type chips that are challenging the mainstream products both in taste and price.

But there are favorites: in the Midwest shoppers prefer a light, blander chip; Easterners would rather eat a strong-flavored, darker chip, and the northeast states and Canada favor salt and vinegar flavored chips.

*This article was excerpted from William J. Lamont, Jr., "Potato Chips Are a Big Business," **Vegetable & Small Fruit Gazette** 10, no. 2 (2006).*

The Post-Harvest Test results are in, and once again they show that Maine's seed potato producers have done an excellent job controlling virus disease in their seed crop. With good results, all the diligent efforts by the Maine seed growers are rewarded. However, the industry must remain vigilant to prevent the buildup of virus levels in future years.

In looking at the overall results of this year's Post-Harvest Test, approximately 77 percent of all the acreage represented by the samples evaluated in Florida had 0.55 percent total virus or less. In other words, just over three out of every four seed acres planted in Maine last year had 0.55 percent total virus or less. Many seed lots had no virus at all! This is great news with respect to the initial level of inoculum in Maine seed as we approach the 2006 growing season. The percentage of acreage meeting the 0.5 percent cutoff for Foundation tolerance is better than the previous three years. Figure 1, which summarizes the percentage of acres that met Foundation tolerance over the past few years, shows a general leveling off of the acreage meeting Foundation tolerance in the 2006 crop.

One important point stands out from the data contained in figure 1. The data shows the cyclical nature of virus levels over time. Maine has seen three cycles of virus buildup over the past few years, with low points in 1991, 1995, and 1997. In looking at these four "valleys" on the graph in figure 1, one can see that each one is less severe than the previous one. The low points of the graph correspond to 46 percent of the acreage meeting Foundation tolerance in the 1991 crop, 57 percent meeting Foundation tolerance in the 1995 crop, and 66 percent meeting Foundation tolerance in the 1997 crop. So it is safe to say that the level of virus disease in Maine seed has not been increasing, even though there are temporary increases from year to year.

One problem with this year's result is that certain varieties were hit harder than others with respect to virus disease. The varieties with acreage rejected through the Post-Harvest Test were Goldrush, Green Mountain, LaChipper, LaRouge, Ontario, Reba and Russet Norkotah. For the first year, there were no Shepody or Russet Burbank lots rejected.

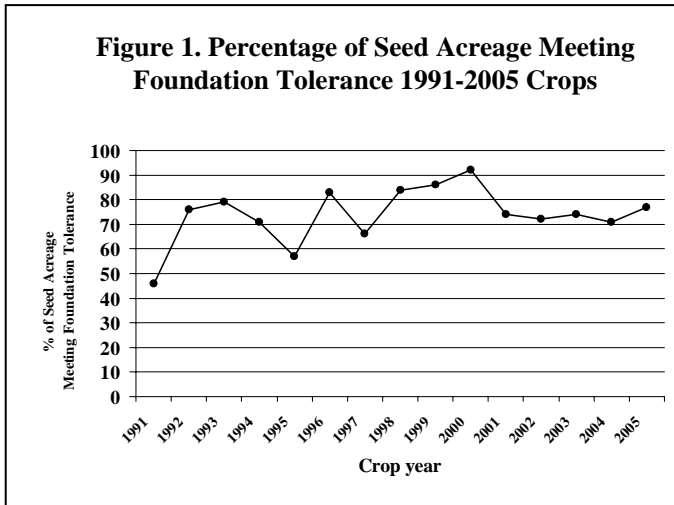
How will this affect the supply of seed of these varieties? Is there adequate seed of these varieties available from other areas to meet the needs of our industry? Is it better to import seed with lower virus levels from areas that may have had other problems (like late blight) than to allow seed from Maine with higher virus levels to be planted? If not, how high can our virus level safely be raised to meet the needs of our industry? With high seed prices this year, will growers plant seed that is rejected from certification and consider any fine for violating the Minimum Standards for Planting (certified seed) law a "cost of doing business"? These are some of the

issues that must be addressed in the coming weeks as we prepare for the 2006 planting season.

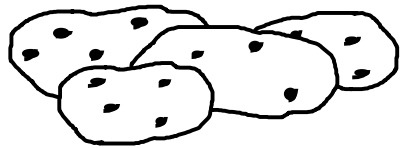
The actions taken during the next months will play an important role in the disease status (virus and other diseases) of Maine's potato industry. Will we see a rebound in the percentage of acreage meeting Foundation tolerance like those that we saw in 1992, 1996, and 1998, or will we see a further decline in acreage meeting Foundation tolerance, such as we saw in 1995 (the second year in a row with increased levels of virus disease)? The department and the industry must work together to address this question in a way that best meets the need of Maine growers.

*Performance Evaluations of Potato Clones and Varieties in the Northeastern States*, which is published annually.

Crop Season	Storage Season	Days to Pip	
		Superior	Russet Burbank
2003	2003-2004	120	190
2002	2002-2003	133	171
2001	2001-2002	125	167
2000	2000-2001	154	177
1999	1999-2000	128	167
1998	1998-1999	128	170
1997	1997-1998	68	53
1996	1996-1997	99	84
1995	1995-1996	114	65
1994	1994-1995	104	83
1993	1993-1994	114	119
1992	1992-1993	106	112
1991	1991-1992	126	130



I have attempted to correlate long or short dormancy with heat unit accumulation and rainfall, but no clear-cut conclusions have appeared. Generally, the more growing-season stress tubers experience, the more physiologically aged the harvested tubers are, and the shorter the dormancy is. Drought stress appears to have more influence than heat unit accumulation, but quantification of the relationship is elusive.



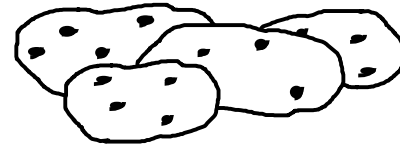
### POTATO DORMANCY

Steven B. Johnson, Ph.D.  
Extension Crops Specialist

Most potatoes undergo a dormant or resting period. Dormancy of potato tubers is not consistent between varieties, nor from year to year within varieties. Growing season stress, storage temperature, and time can all affect the physiological age of seed and therefore have an impact on dormancy. Growing season stress can have a marked influence on the physiological age of seed the following planting season.

Dormancy is gradually lost during storage, and potato tubers sprout. Piping is the breaking of dormancy followed by sprout elongation. Once sprouting has begun, it will continue. The longer the tuber has been sprouting, the more advanced its physiological age.

A portion of the research conducted in Dr. Greg Porter's program at the University of Maine includes potato dormancy. The table below includes some information from the Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station bulletin,



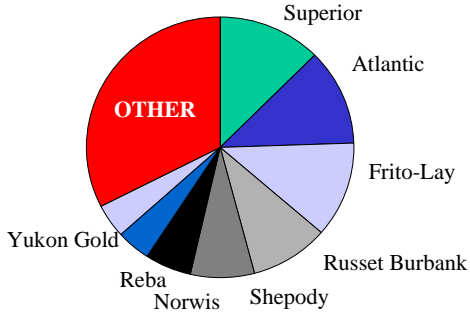
### SEED POTATO PRODUCTION IN THE UNITED STATES FOR THE 2005 CROP

Steven B. Johnson, Ph.D.  
Extension Crops Specialist

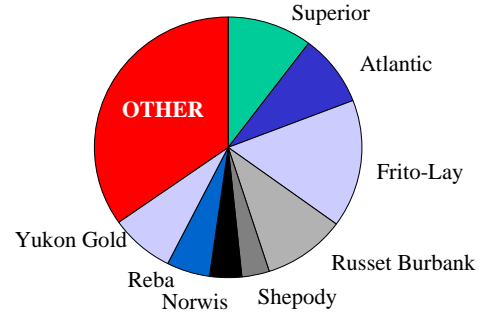
There were 113,313 acres of potato seed entered for certification in the United States during the 2005 growing season. This is compared to 137,386 acres entered during the 2001 growing season. Maine is the fourth leading state in the country for seed acreage. The eight leading states account for 96 percent of U.S. seed acreage.

As expected, the acreage of seed for processing potatoes dominates the national production. Frito-Lay varieties clumped together are the leading seed acreage in Maine, producing 17 percent of the nation's acreage for Frito-Lay. This is a change from 2001 when the variety 'Superior' comprised the leading seed acreage in Maine. 'Superior' barely edges out 'Russet Burbank' for second in Maine acreage. In 2005, Maine produced 64 percent of the nation's acreage for 'Superior,' down from 70 percent in 2001.

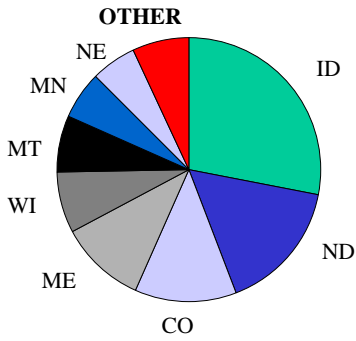
**2001 VARIETIES OF MAINE POTATO SEED PRODUCTION**



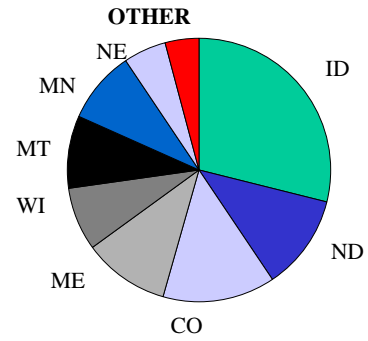
**2005 VARIETIES OF MAINE POTATO SEED PRODUCTION**



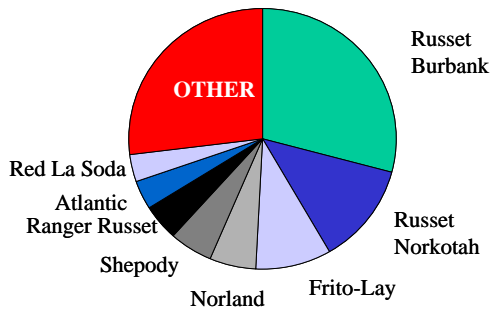
**2001 ACRES OF US POTATO SEED PRODUCTION**



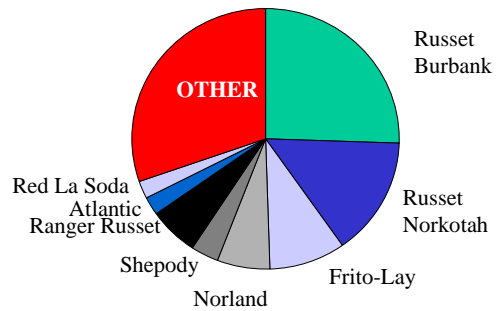
**2005 ACRES OF US POTATO SEED PRODUCTION**



**2001 VARIETIES OF US POTATO SEED PRODUCTION**



**2005 VARIETIES OF US POTATO SEED PRODUCTION**



**SEED CUTTING AND SEED TREATMENT  
WHAT ARE OTHER PEOPLE DOING?  
BACKGROUND DATA FROM THE POTATO IPM  
PROGRAM**

James Dwyer, Extension Crops Specialist

Dealing with the seed cutting and seed treatment issue can be a confusing and frustrating decision-making process, in which you can only hope that you make the right choices. Recently we were asked if we could share some of the data collected for the Potato IPM program, so that growers could get a feel for some of the practices that other growers within the industry are using and what the results have been. The information was collected from growers who are participating in the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Potato IPM program. Understand that while these growers represent a cross section of the industry, including seed, table, and processing acres from almost 125 farms, there is not an even proportion of seed, processing, and table-stock farms represented. This is simply reporting back what the participants within the program are doing.

**Seed Treatments**

In 2005, 94 percent of our IPM growers used some type of seed treatment. It was also interesting to note that 78 percent of our IPM growers fresh-cut their seed in 2005, compared to 67 percent of the growers in 1988.

**Percent of growers fresh-cutting seed**

1988	67%
1989	69%
2000	59%
2003	62%
2005	78%

This significant change in the number of growers returning to fresh-cutting seed is a management decision based on Cooperative Extension and university recommendations intended to minimize the potential of late blight spread during the post-cutting tuberization process. It is also interesting to note that 47 percent of the growers in the University of Maine Potato IPM program used a “three-way” seed treatment material in order to protect their seed, also following Cooperative Extension recommendations.

**2005 Potato IPM Seed Treatment Materials**

<u>Material</u>	<u>% Used</u>	<u>% Plant Stand</u>
Evolve	47	89
Gaucho-MZ	14	89
Lime	2	64
Maxim MZ	7	82
Moncoat	17	82
PM 223	4	87
Tops MZ	3	87
Nothing	6	76

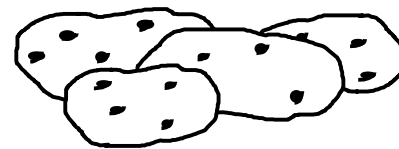
**Plant stands**

We were asked if we could share plant-stand information as well. The problem with analyzing plant-stand information is comparing appropriately, because there are so many factors that go into creating a plant stand. We tried to compare similar seed spacings whenever possible so that planter efficiency would not be a major factor. One question we were asked was whether growers have noted any differences in plant stands in relation to the seed treatment utilized.

As we look at these data it is easy to see that the commercially available seed treatment materials do improve the number of plants within the field. Historically, plant stands in Maine have hovered near the 70-75 percent range. Plant stands in this data set are generally much higher. Producers should note that in this commercial setting, lime used as a seed treatment produced the lowest plant stands and is not a recommended seed treatment; in fact using no seed treatment produced better plant stands. In fairness, however, one should also note that the “lime” sample size was rather limited.

**Multifaceted approach**

From this initial look at the seed cutting and seed treatment practices of the industry it is great to see that the majority of growers are following Extension recommendations, especially when it comes to seed treatments. Eighty-eight percent of the growers in our sample are using a seed treatment with mancozeb. Experimental data from both Dr. David Lambert, Plant Pathologist with the University of Maine’s Agricultural Experiment Station, and Dr. Steve Johnson, Crops Specialist with University of Maine Cooperative Extension, show significant benefits in late blight control with a seed treatment containing mancozeb. Within this 88 percent using mancozeb-based treatments, 47 percent of the growers are using Evolve, which contains both mancozeb and cymoxanil, which experimental data indicates improves control of potato late blight. As we plan for the 2006 potato crop, it will continue to be extremely important for growers to maintain their multifaceted approach to control potato late blight.



**COST SHARE PAYMENTS THAT MAY BENEFIT  
POTATO GROWERS USING INTEGRATED PEST  
MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

Skip Babineau  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides conservation planning assistance to farmers to help them attain sustainable use and sound management of soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources. The purpose of conservation planning is to prevent degradation of natural

## EVALUATION OF POTATO SEED PIECE TREATMENTS 2005

Steven B. Johnson, Ph.D.  
Extension Crops Specialist

resources and to assure their sustained use and productivity, while considering the farmers' economic and social needs related to the resources.

Some cost-share incentives may be available for practices that are included in a conservation plan on eligible farms. Pest management is a component of a conservation plan that addresses potential pesticide leaching and runoff risks with practices used to reduce those risks. During the planning process, the producer provides a complete list of pesticides that will be used on the fields.

A software pesticide screening tool (WIN-PST) is used to evaluate the risks based upon the pesticides and soil type. If WIN-PST identifies a moderate or higher human or fish hazard potential (this has occurred with mancozeb), mitigation techniques are needed to lessen the potential impacts. Mitigation techniques may include a combination of management practices, conservation practices, and IPM strategies.

Specific mitigation techniques using IPM strategies include using scouting and (IPM) thresholds, using lower application rates, delaying application, or changing the timing of an application. Specific mitigation techniques using management strategies may include lengthening a crop rotation to break pest life cycles. Specific mitigation techniques using conservation strategies may include waterways to divert excess water.

Cost-share or incentive payments may be available through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Cost-share requests are competitive and approvals are made based upon ranking sheet results. Requests will be approved based on ranking until the funds are exhausted.

For pest management, a cost-share payment of 24 dollars per acre can be made a maximum of three times on a field. This cost-share is a flat rate payment and no invoices are required.

Bear in mind that any practice already in place on the farm cannot be cost-shared. All appropriate risk mitigation practices are included in the conservation plan. However, a request for cost sharing can be made for needed practices that are not already being used on a farm. For instance, if scouting and IPM strategies have not been used, but the conservation plan calls for them, a cost-share payment can be requested to facilitate proper scouting and the implementation of IPM strategies.

The process is not that complex. Make an appointment and bring your pesticide records into the NRCS office so a plan can be developed. If necessary, management, conservation, or IPM practices can become a part of the plan. NRCS submits the plan in your behalf. Should you be funded, appropriate records will have to be provided to NRCS. Required records include the extent of the practice applied, scouting records, application rate, method, timing and materials used, and control method or mitigation technique used.

Single-row plots, forty feet long were established near Van Buren seed piece treatment evaluation. Each of the treatments were replicated four times and arranged in a randomized complete block design. 'Russet Burbank' seed pieces were hand cut and hand planted at a plant spacing of one foot and a row spacing of three feet on June 3. The treated seed pieces were planted two inches deep and immediately covered with four inches of soil. Rubber examination gloves, changed with treatments, assured no cross contamination of materials or seed occurred. The plots were fertilized with 1050 pounds per acre of 14-14-14, and maintained by the grower as part of regular field maintenance, including appropriate weed, insect, and disease control measures. Ratings of plant emergence and vigor were made on June 30. On August 17, plant ratings for *Rhizoctonia* lesions were performed. The rating system used was 0 = no infection, 1 = one lesion less than 2 mm, 2 = larger lesion or more than one small lesion, 3 = coalescing of lesions, but stem is not girdled, 4 = stem girdled, 5 = stem dead. The plots were top killed on September 5. The center 20 feet of the plots was hand harvested on September 28. The potatoes were sized and yields were recorded in pounds per plot.

This is part of an ongoing effort by Cooperative Extension staff. Please note that not all of the seed-piece treatments evaluated may be legal in Maine.

Coverage may be inadequate with 8 ounces of fungicide per 100 pounds of cut seed, but excess fungicide remains if 16 ounces per 100 pounds is used.

(See table on next page.)



**SPUDLINES** is published by the University of Maine Cooperative Extension to provide information for the Maine Potato Industry. The annual subscription rate is \$5.00. The Educational Committee of the Maine Potato Board provides sponsorship of growers they represent and the allied industry needed to support their growers. For further information, contact: **Steve Johnson, UMCE, PO Box 727, Presque Isle, ME 04769; (207) 764-3361**

**EVALUATION OF POTATO SEED PIECE TREATMENTS 2005**

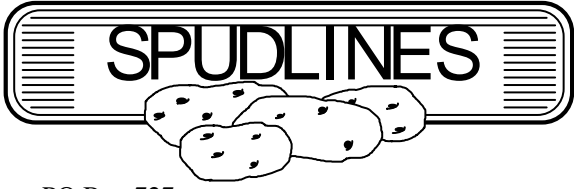
Treatment	Rate per 100 pounds of seed	Emergence June 30  (percent)	Vigor June 30  (percent)	<i>Rhizoctonia</i> stem rating  (0-5)	Total plot yield  (pounds)
Check	0.0 oz	85.00	85.00	1.35	28.69
Max 4FS	0.04 oz	95.00	93.75	0.92	35.93
Maxim MZ	4.0 oz	94.13	82.50	1.56	28.41
Maxim MZ	8.0 oz	91.68	87.50	1.08	32.61
Evolve	12.0 oz	96.68	97.50	1.11	31.71
TopsMZ	12.0 oz	93.35	91.25	1.35	33.23
MonCoatMZ	12.0 oz	94.18	90.00	0.95	39.35
Maxim MZ + Amistar	4.0 oz + 0.18 oz	90.85	91.25	0.93	33.96
Amistar	0.18 oz/100ft	90.00	75.00	1.16	34.16
LSD (P = 0.05)		11.96	17.24	0.81	6.63

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