

NEWS FROM THE POTATO LAB



December, 2008

Montana Seed Potato Seminar

The 43rd annual Montana Seed Potato Seminar was held in Missoula on November 3 and 4, 2008. On Tuesday November 3, growers had a productive morning session followed by an excellent lunch and program hosted by the United Potato Partners. The United Potato Partners program included a number of talks which took a critical look at the costs of inputs used in potato production, and detailed analysis of production budgets. The need for more specific information on seed potato production costs to develop meaningful budgeting tools for seed potato growers was raised. At the end of the session, a

survey was conducted by Buzz Shahan. Contact Nina Zidack if you would like to see the results.

The excellent slate of speakers on Wednesday, November 4, can be credited to former Director Mike Sun, who had developed

the list of topics and made arrangements with the speakers before I came on the job October 1. The morning was filled with a wide range of topics on diseases of seed potatoes which have importance for certification. Dr. Phil Hamm, Oregon State, provided valuable information on the relative susceptibility and infection rates of different potato varieties. Dr. Neil Gudmestad, North Dakota State, updated us on a highly specific diagnostic assay for the ring rot pathogen and on the current status of zebra chip, which is now known to be caused by a bacteria-like organism. Dr. Gary Secor, North Dakota State,



Don Bradshaw, Eileen Carpenter and Elaine Nichols at the Banquet

provided detailed information on a number of fungal plant diseases, and “busted the myths” associated with different pathogens and their implication in seed-borne disease. I was very pleased to see the results presented by Dr. Mark Pavek, Washington State, for the performance of Montana seedlots in the Washington State Variety trials. Overall, our mosaic and blackleg levels in the last 5 years were the lowest for all states included in their test. In the afternoon, Jay Penick, President of Farm Credit gave a very timely account of the current financial situation, and how it will affect Montana Growers in both the short-term and long-term. Dr. Bruce Tainio from Tainio Technologies, Cheney, WA gave an intriguing talk on nutrient management schemes, and how nutritional balances in the plant can influence a plants ability to tolerate environmental stress and attack by plant pathogens and insects.



Banquet Entertainment "Left over Biscuits"

The afternoon was finished off with a bit of nostalgia provided by Brent Clement, who showed numerous pictures of Montana Potato Growers from his 30 years with Potato Country Magazine. Mr. Clement also passed on a number of observations which were provided by experts in every facet of the potato industry. The seminar was finished off Wednesday

evening with an outstanding banquet including some bluegrass music provided by "Left Over Biscuits" from Big Fork.

This year's seminar was hosted by the Northern Montana Seed Potato Growers with Roger and Kathy Starkel providing coordination for the registration and hotel and conference services.

Hawaii Post-Harvest Planting



The planting operation and crew

The post harvest test on the island of Oahu, Hawaii was planted on November 18-20. Overall, the planting conditions were good, and 1.25" of rain was received 2 days after planting. Manhattan grower John Venhuizen assisted with planting and provided the much needed muscle to open the three bags required this year for each sample. The three bag scheme allowed for enhanced field organization, but required

significant extra labor, both for you at collection time, and for planting. If you see John, be sure to thank him for volunteering his time, strong back and planting expertise. Since

planting, the potatoes have received some additional showers and are being drip irrigated. As of December 1, some of the potatoes are starting to emerge. The staff at Aloun Farms will photograph the field weekly so we can monitor plant growth and weed control. On December 29, Eileen Carpenter and I will travel to Hawaii for leaf picking and



John Venhuizen and Nina Zidack after a day of planting

inspections. Please give me a call if you would like to visit your plots in Hawaii. My cell phone number is (406)451-3097. January 7-16 would be preferable to allow us time to complete the leaf picking and the first inspection.

PCN Update

Eileen Carpenter and her crew have finished processing all of the soil samples for Potato Cyst Nematode and will begin readings very soon.

GMO Test

You must call the lab and request GMO testing.

The MSU Potato Lab will provide GMO testing services. The lab can use the leaves from the Hawaii test, or you can submit tuber samples. The cost of testing tubers is much higher. Take advantage of the cost by testing the leaves from Hawaii. Costs of GMO tests will be as follows:

Leaves - GMO test is \$45 per sample.

Tubers - GMO test is \$220 per sample.

The leaves will be here right after the New Year, so let Susie Siemsen know if you want GMO testing. Bringing in 400 tubers later will result in a significant increase in cost. Talk to your buyers to see if they require this test.

Please **call the lab at 994-3150 and leave a message if you want GMO testing and on which samples.**

Susie Siemsen will call you back and get the details on December 10 since she will attend the Potato Association of America Certification Section meeting and the NPC Seed subcommittee meeting in Detroit from December 3-6.

Plant Orders - Nuclear and G1 Growers

Elaine Nichols will be sending out the order form for plants for the 2009 Crop. The deadline for ordering will be December 31, 2008. Be sure to fill out the date that you will pick up your plants.

Late Blight Testing

If you will be shipping potatoes to Colorado in the spring, tubers need to be submitted to the lab a minimum of 4 weeks before shipping.

Future Newsletters

You can expect to receive newsletters from the Potato Lab at the end of each quarter. Additional reports and notices will be mailed out to growers as needed.