

News from the Potato Lab



Bill Cottom retiring as director for District 2

Bill Cottom has chosen to step down from the MPIA board of directors and spend a little more time pursuing his golf game. Many thanks go out to Bill for all of the time and energy he has put into the Montana Potato Improvement Association through a lifetime as a grower and over 30 years serving on the board of directors. Bill's son Steve Cottom will finish out his term.

Highlights of the June 10 Board Meeting

Due to the delays many growers were experiencing getting their final planting done, the June board meeting was condensed into a one day meeting on June 10. The board welcomed Steve Cottom to his first meeting, and got right to work on an ambitious agenda.



MPIA Board From Left to Right: Nina Zidack, John Venhuizen, Jack Lake, Steve Cottom, Roger Starkel, Steve Streich, Dan Dyk and Sid Schutter

Nina and Susie reported on progress of lab research on implementation of PCR, and testing for varietal resistance to PVA. In experiments comparing PCR to ELISA, PCR is 10X more sensitive for detection of PVX, and 20X more sensitive for both PVA and PVY. In bulk sampling

experiments, PVX and PVY were detectable at a level of one infected leaf per 1000 using PCR. Susceptibility to PVA is influenced by variety and to date, Umatilla, Alturas, Ranger and Amisk appear to be resistant to infection by PVA.

Other agenda items included the investigation of adopting seed lot numbers for Montana Certified Seed, and revising inspection and testing requirements for greenhouse grown mini-tubers. Both of these topics are in the development phase and open for comment before the February 2011 meeting where the MPIA Rules and Regulations are amended.

Larry Krum from the MT Department of Agriculture reported that the MDA would like to raise penalties for violations of the Late Blight Quarantine but only if the MPIA was in support. He asked the board to review the current quarantine and suggest any changes that may be needed. He also reported on requirements for exporting to Canada including ring rot testing, PCN soil testing. Leaf roll testing is required if the potatoes are destined for Prince Edward Island.

2010 Potato Crop

In spite of all of the weather delays, the 2010 crop is planted and the majority of the registrations have been submitted. We have 9,459 acres registered so far and we anticipate that total acreage will be between 9,700 and 9,800. Acreage in 2008 was 10,016 acres and 10,340 acres were certified in 2009.

2010 Lab Testing and Inspections

All of the pickers, laboratory crew and inspectors have been hired and are ready to go. Leaf picking will begin on June 25 and inspections will begin on July 7. If you have any G3's that need picking, please call Susie Siemsen so she can get you on the picking schedule. This year we will be testing all

nuclear, G1 and G2 for PVY and PVA. G2 will be tested for PVX in addition to PVY and PVA.

This growing season you can expect to see veteran inspectors Lucy Cooke, Don Bradshaw, Eileen Carpenter, Billie Welty, Leon Welty, and Director Nina Zidack come to your farm for inspections. In addition, two new inspectors will be joining us. Many of you have already met Kim Prosek who has been working in the lab with Susie Siemsen. We will also be joined by Bob Johnston, a recent retiree from the Plant Science and Plant Pathology Department who has 40 years of experience as a field pathologist. Kim and Bob will replace Leon and Billie Welty who will be retiring from inspecting at the end of the season. If you have any fields that you would like us to look at earlier than July 7, please give us a call at the lab. The inspection schedule will be distributed on June 29.

Washington Seed Potato Trials

The Field Day for the Washington Seed Trial is June 24 from 8:30AM to 12:00 noon in Othello, Washington. All of the inspectors will work with the WSU staff to perform readings of the seed plots on June 22, and will attend the field day on the 24th. We hope to see many of our Montana growers there representing their outstanding Montana Certified Seed Potatoes.



Montana Growers and inspectors at the 2009 Washington Seed Potato Trials. Nick Schutter, Nina Zidack, Leon Welty Billie Welty, Steve Maughan, and Lucy Cooke

Potato Lab receives grant to improve disease forecasting

The potato lab received a \$23,000 grant to improve the disease forecasting capabilities of the program. Funds will be used to provide educational opportunities to growers to learn how to capitalize on public epidemiological information that is already available, and to enhance the weather data gathered from our grower weather stations. A new forecasting system for late blight and early blight will be developed through cooperation with Oregon State and will be online next year. We will hold a short workshop at the Seed Seminar in November to introduce the resources. If you would like to peruse the resources that are already available on the internet, go to www.uspest.org and click on Montana. If you would like to see the current predictions for late blight risk nationwide, go to http://uspest.org/risk/tom_pot_map.