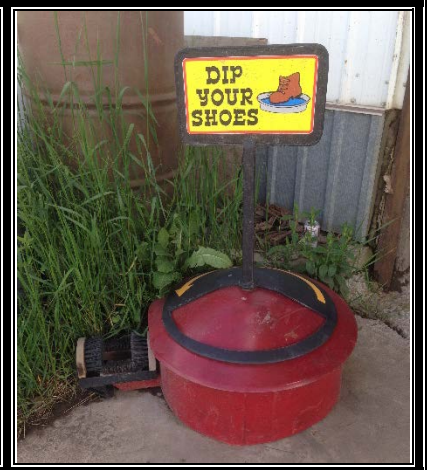


# *News from the Potato Lab*

Summer 2017



## **Continuing BRR issues in Idaho illustrate need for vigilance by Montana Growers**

Bacterial ring rot continues to rear its ugly head in our region and this spring there was another significant identification of BRR at shipping point inspection on a farm in Idaho. There is speculation that this disease continues to move around from farm to farm via seed cutting and on equipment including trucks. Through discussion with the MPIA Board at the June meeting, there was consensus that Montana needs to take a proactive approach to prevent the entry of BRR into Montana. Two approaches were identified. The first is to initiate Montana grower initiated testing of out-of-state trucks at shipping. In cooperation with the Montana Department of Ag, the MSU Potato lab will provide swabs for sampling trucks to shipping point inspectors. At the Montana growers' discretion, they could request sampling of any truck they choose. The samples would then be sent to the MSU Potato Lab for testing by PCR. A grower may choose to sample one or more trucks from every customer or trucking company, or just trucks from areas that have been servicing farms with known problems. The Potato Lab will provide the testing service to the growers at cost. The second approach to controlling BRR is enhanced monitoring through core sampling and testing of all G2 and G3. The MPIA board and Director Nina Zidack agreed that this new rule should be initiated for the 2018 crop year and more discussion will take place at our February 2018 meeting. The board also strongly recommends that all growers core sample and test all G2 and G3 for the 2017 crop, even though it is not in the rules yet and is not demanded for all contracts. The testing we have done to date to fulfill contracts with customers who require BRR testing has been very valuable in demonstrating that

Montana has remained BRR free for over 40 years, and that Montana seed cannot be implicated in any of the recent outbreaks in our customer states.

## **Montana has another good year at Washington Commercial Seed Potato Trials**

Washington State University has conducted a commercial seed lot trial at the WSU Othello Research Farm for over 50 years. All Washington growers are strongly encouraged to submit a 200 tuber sample from each seed lot that they purchase. This provides a valuable non-biased assessment of seed quality, and can identify specific issues in particular lots.



The Montana inspectors helped read the seed lots on the Tuesday June 20 and the field day was June 22. All seedlots were scored for mosaic, blackleg and other problems including herbicide injury and genetic abnormalities. At the time of the reading, the plot identity is not revealed to the inspectors. Montana has retained its position as the largest contributor to the Washington commercial seed lot trials with 113

lots representing 36% of the total submissions. Of these lots, 58% had no visible virus and 24% had one mosaic. 15% of the lots scored 1-2% mosaic.

**Disease forecasts available soon:** All of the weather stations have been deployed and are collecting data. We will send out the first weather station reports the first week of July unless we have a weather event that warrants earlier recommendations. We will be using software from a California company called SureHarvest to develop the reports. Reports will be sent via e-mail every Monday or Tuesday throughout the growing season. **Disease forecast reports will only be sent via e-mail. Please check your e-mail for the latest forecast!**

**2017 Seed Potato Acreage Report**

Montana seed potato acreage is down slightly from last year at 10,179 acres compared with 10,399 acres in 2016. Production in most counties is very level with decreases noted in Beaverhead and Lake counties and small increases in Broadwater and Madison Counties.

County	2014 Acres	2015 Acres	2016 Acres	2017 Acres
Beaverhead	785	725	1050	846
Broadwater	1488	1331	1665	1702
Cascade	7	6	6	6
Custer	87	90	130	122
Deerlodge	283	270	150	173
Flathead	266	262	264	265
Gallatin	4271	4484	4577	4553
Jefferson	130	137	0	0
Lake	1641	1712	1726	1644
Madison	1237	1190	766	865
Sanders	0	4	5	3
Total	10,195	10,211	10,339	10,179

**Sales for the 2016 Crop right at record level of 3 million cwt set for 2014 Crop**



At the June Board meeting, Larry Krum from the Montana Department of Agriculture reported that the 2016 crop equaled the record sales (as recorded at shipping point) from the 2014 crop. The 2015 crop showed the second highest amount of potatoes at 2.9 million. The third highest year was the 2010 crop with 2.83 million cwt and the lowest amount sold in the last 10 years was 2.5 million cwt from the 2009 crop which was affected by frost. Considering that our acreages have been very level, this is an indication that our yields have gone up and that the customer base for Montana Certified Seed Potatoes remains strong.

**Late Blight Fungicides**

The recent issue of Potato Health Progress which is put out by the Idaho, Oregon and Washington Potato Commissions has an up-to-date list of fungicides and recommendations for controlling late blight. We have included a copy in this newsletter.

