



Teagasc Potato Newsletter September 2021

Blight Control

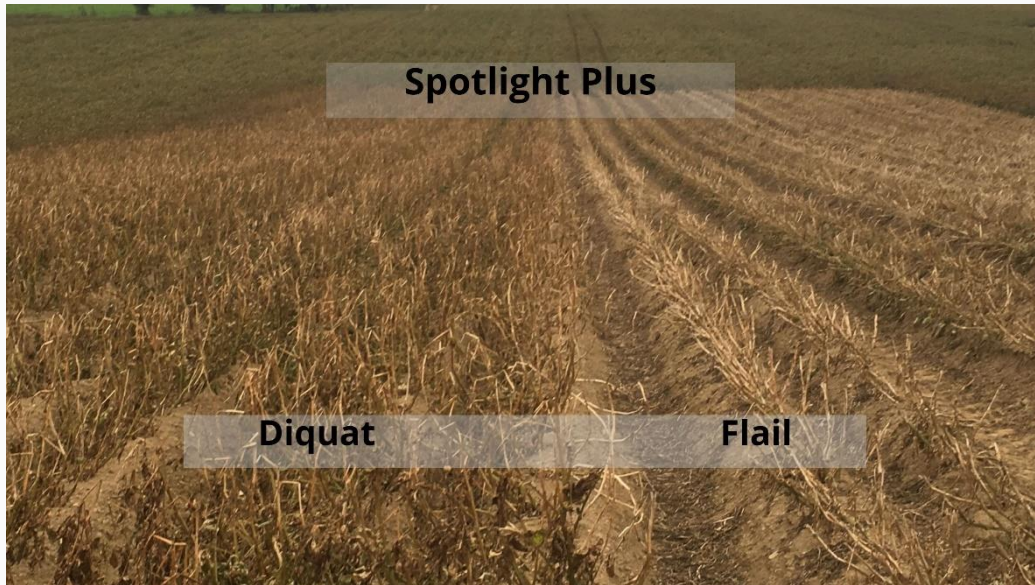
There have been numerous reports of blight during the month of August and we have seen trials in Oak Park being heavily infected in the last few weeks. So keep this in mind in the early weeks of September during desiccation. Whether you are using Spotlight Plus or Gozai or even if you are flailing haulms crops will continue to be at risk so a fungicide must be included with the desiccant and/or applied within 24 hours of the flails. Ranman Top and Infinito are probably what most growers are using at this time.



Blight was easy to find in Oak Park trial plots during August

Desiccation

Trials from 2020 show that trying to desiccate crops with Spotlight Plus and/or Gozai is much slower in September than in August as the light intensity is not as strong especially later in the month. While many growers have some crop desiccated there is still many crops yet to receive any desiccant or flail. Starting in early September with either Spotlight Plus or Gozai it is likely to take between 5 to 6 weeks before crops are fully desiccated, although the immediate forecast (Sept 6th) is for bright sunny weather in many areas, so this should assist a faster knockdown. At the time of writing no decision has been made on the derogation for the use of Diquat for this season so growers should plan to use the current options that are available. The picture below from a desiccation trial a number of years ago shows the differences in the speed of knockdown between diquat and flailing, in the foreground and Spotlight Plus in the background, when used in September.



While the weather is dry in many areas and ground conditions are relatively good, this gives a good opportunity to try haulm topping as a way to ensure that at least some crop is ready for harvest by early October. Remember if you are starting to burn off at this stage with Spotlight Plus or Gozai, it will probably be somewhere around the 10th or 15th of October before skins are fully set and stems are detaching easily from the stolons.

Prepare the Store

All pre-harvest checks and cleaning of the stores should be carried out as soon as possible you won't get time once you start filling the store. Make sure all equipment (fridge units, fans, louvres, probes, monitoring systems etc.) have all been tested and are in good working order. Any malfunction in any of these could result in inefficiencies in the operation of the fridge unit which can over the season result in higher electricity costs or worse disease spread in the crop. One simple test that should be carried out in every store is to assess them for leakage, this can be done by simply walking in closing all doors and turning out the lights. Any light coming into the store is a problem as this will allow heat in or out and will cost more money during the season. Watch out for insulation damage from the previous season again this will allow heat in and lead to higher electricity costs. Store hygiene is very important when it comes to preventing disease spread especially silver scurf. If this was an issue in the previous crop then the stores need to be thoroughly cleaned and vacuumed to prevent re-infection of the new crop. Remember a single gram of dust can contain thousands of silver scurf spores, all surfaces should then be disinfected once the dust and debris have been removed. Similarly with boxes these should be cleaned before

re-entering the store. There should also be a plan for filling the stores, review how this was completed last year and see if there are improvements that can be achieved especially with box stacking and positioning near doors and fridge units. All forklift drivers should be consulted with and trained to make sure they know the plan. The **AHDB Store Managers Guide** below provides some very useful information for anyone running a potato store.



[AHDB Store managers Guide](#)