

Teagasc Potato Newsletter

November 2020

HARVEST UPDATE

While harvest started off well in many parts of the country and some growers managed to complete lifting earlier than ever before, some growers have been badly affected by wet weather. This has delayed harvest and in some areas there is still a substantial area to be lifted. However a good dry week would more or less finish off the season for 2020.

One of the key issues this year was poor skin set which for some growers was a substantial issue and it also delayed lifting on some farms. Many growers were blaming the desiccants that were used this year and claimed that they were slower to set skins than would have been the case with diquat. The AHDB have looked at this and their findings show that there is very little difference in the length of time that it takes skins to set between treatments of diquat or the PPO desiccants i.e. Spotlight Plus or Gozai. Their work shows that at most there is a 1-2 day delay in skin set from using the PPO inhibitors over diquat, so that wasn't the issue this year. Wet soils are more likely to delay skin set and after the wet weather in August this looks most likely as the reason this year.

Teagasc held a desiccation workshop at the end of September this year which was well attended. The workshop was set up to look at the performance of the available desiccants in two scenarios, firstly an April planted

Rooster crop with approx. 125 Kg of N applied and secondly a mid-May planted Rooster crop with 140 Kg of N applied. The April planted crop was desiccated in August as the crop was starting to senesce while the May planted crop was desiccated in September but was still very green at the time of desiccation. The results can be viewed on the video link below, by using the Qr code if you have an Iphone or Qr code reader app on the phone or by simply searching for "Teagasc Potato Desiccation" in YouTube.

<https://qr.go.page.link/DLG9s>



STORAGE

Many stores are now full and most are in the process of curing and then bringing down the crop to the desired temperature. Remember reduce the store temperature slowly, about 0.5°C per day is about as fast as you should bring it down. Any more than that and you may cause condensation which will allow diseases to spread.

Carry out regular checks in the store to make sure everything is working as it should, look out for wet spots in boxes,

condensation on the roof or on the ground is a sign that all is not right in the store and should be investigated. They are a sign that there is heat being generated somewhere in the store and when this hits a cold surface it forms water.

Check the temperature probes are working properly there should be little if any difference in temperature between them. A difference of say 1⁰C or more between temperature probes would suggest that either there is a problem in the box or the probe is not working properly either way it needs to be inspected. Every store should have 10-12 working probes in the boxes to monitor temperature. Remember these are sending info back to the fridge telling it when to turn on and off.

For box stores a ventilation rate of 0.02m³/s/t is recommended. Over ventilation will result in excess moisture loss and decrease weight, as well as costing money. Under ventilation can result in CO₂ build up, condensation etc. which can spread disease. Whether positive or passive ventilation is being used make sure the air is travelling through the areas that you want it to travel. Remember air will always take the easiest path around the store.

A good guide to managing potato stores can be found on the AHDB website at: <https://potatoes.ahdb.org.uk/publications/store-managers-guide> or use the QR code below to view it on your smartphone.



SEED

Brexit is now looming and its impact on seed availability is now coming into focus. At the moment rules state that from January 1st 2021 seed from the UK will not be allowed into Ireland. Even if some sort of bilateral agreement is put in place it could take months before the necessary paperwork is put in place.

Therefore anyone who imports seed or relies on imported seed should have that seed in their stores before December 31st at the latest. However don't expect the seed companies to be able to order and deliver seed at short notice close to the deadline.

When you place an order, take delivery of seed as early as you can, provided you have storage available, this gives you some time if there are any issues to get them sorted before the deadline. The closer you get to the deadline the more difficult it will be to sort out any issues that may arise.

As seed arrives, carefully inspect it for defects etc. before putting it into store. Check the tuber temperature as they may be higher than the fridge temperature. If this is the case avoid putting them straight into the fridge store as you can get condensation on the seed tubers which will be respiring and giving off heat. Where possible place them in a store that is closer to temperature of the seed and then continue the process of bring them down to their holding temperature.

Shay Phelan

Potato specialist
087-7985195

shay.phelan@teagasc.ie