

Potato Newsletter

September 2020

Desiccation

Most growers have already started desiccating crops and in many cases the follow-up application will be due shortly. While the options are limited to flail or chemical desiccants there are still some options that growers can use to allow harvest to begin at the end of the month. Both Spotlight Plus (Carfentrazone) and Gozai will take at least 4 weeks to full desiccate a crop to the point where stolons detach easily and skins are set.

Table 1; Chemical desiccation strategies options

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Option 1	Spotlight Plus 1.0L/ha	Spotlight Plus 0.6L/ha	
Option 2	Gozai 0.8L/ha	Gozai 0.8L/ha	
Option 3	Gozai 0.8L/ha	Spotlight Plus 1.0L/ha	
Option 4	Spotlight Plus 1.0L/ha	Gozai 0.8L/ha	Spotlight Plus 0.6L/ha
Option 5	Gozai 0.8L/ha	Spotlight Plus 1.0L/ha	Gozai 0.8L/ha

A third application may be necessary where crops are late maturing, have large canopies or where conditions were less than ideal at application. Be aware that while Spotlight Plus has a 7 day harvest interval, Gozai has a 14 day harvest interval.

As mentioned in the previous newsletter there are conditions which help them to work more efficiently and faster such as;

- Apply to a crop that is already senescing

- Apply in bright sunshine
- Apply in the middle of the day between 11am & 3pm
- Apply second applications 7 days after the first
- Apply a fungicide e.g. Ranman Top, Infinito with each application

If any of these conditions are not met then you can expect the products to work more slowly. Therefore growers need to work backwards in terms of planning the harvest. A harvest plan or strategy will help to start the harvest on time and progress through the different fields and varieties.

For many growers haulm topping has formed part of that strategy this year. Crops that are topped and then desiccated 24 hours later will typically be ready for harvest in 3-4 weeks. In many cases growers are reluctant to haulm top for a variety of reasons including ground conditions and the threat of spreading diseases such as blight and blackleg, where it is used it is the fastest method of desiccating the crop. However growers should consider flailing a portion of their crop to facilitate beginning harvest in early October while giving the Gozai/Spotlight Plus options an extra week or so to fully desiccate the crop.

When formulating the **harvest plan** consider the following options;

- Flail 5-10% of the crop, these will be the crops that you will harvest first.
- Flail dry fields this will ensure as little scalping as possible.
- Pick a field with no disease if possible for flailing. Remember these will be

first into store and last out.

- Apply Gozai or Spotlight Plus within 24-48 hours after flailing. This will protect the crop and ensure that crops will be ready in 4 weeks.
- Where flailing is not an option, target the first planted crops for chemical desiccation, these should be starting to senesce by now.
- Crops desiccated with Gozai or Spotlight on September 1st will probably not be ready for harvest until October 5-10th
- Target Rooster for harvesting first and leave large canopy or late crops e.g. Pinks or Markies an extra week or two to fully desiccate.
- After the final desiccant application carry out weekly crop inspections to determine skin finish and stolon detachment. Just because a crop was desiccated first doesn't necessarily mean that it will be ready for harvesting first as conditions at the time of application will play a role.

Blight

There have been many of reports of blight over the last few weeks with all the rain in August. Don't cut back on the programme at this stage even if the crops are being desiccated no matter if you are topping or using chemical desiccants. Halum topping will leave the stems damaged and exposed so apply a fungicide as soon as possible after the crop has been topped. You may have to wait 24-48 hours to let material die if it is lying on top of some of the stems. Where you are using Spotlight Plus or Gozai include a fungicide with both applications as the

leaves will still have some life left in them and so need protection.

Where you have blight in crops, Teagasc are still interested in collecting samples to identify strains present in the population. You can contact me or any of our offices to arrange collection of the samples.

Seed

With all the other distractions in 2020 we seemed to have forgotten about Brexit which still hasn't gone away. We are still in exactly the same situation as this time last year in that, there is growing concern that negotiations will not be concluded by December 31st which could trigger a "No Deal" Brexit.

In the event of a no deal Brexit the UK now become a "**third country**" with no access to the EU for potatoes until a bi-lateral agreement has been signed. This potentially could take months to sort out leaving the window for getting access to seed next spring very tight, if at all. Even where an agreement has been developed there will be more inspections and certification required which in itself could cause further delays.

With approximately 50% of our seed coming in from the UK, this has the potential of crippling our industry through a lack of seed.

So what can growers do? The answer is not much other than to contact your seed supplier to try to organise delivery of UK sourced seed before Christmas just in case. Otherwise growers should contact their local merchant and try to secure supplies from Irish seed growers or other EU growers if possible.

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