Potato diseases are starting to pick up across the state with the recent wet weather. Dr. Mike Thornton reports that in the Treasure Valley area, there were locally heavy rains associated with thunderstorms much of the past week with some hail damage in a few isolated areas. Cooler temperatures, when combined with the rain are favorable for diseases such as late blight, white mold and aerial stem rot (with hail damage). As such field men should be vigilant and fields should be scouted on a regular basis and growers are urged to apply protectant fungicides.

In the Magic valley early blight and white mold is on the increase due to recent rain showers. Again, due to the weather growers should be vigilant for signs of late blight.

In south east Idaho there are currently three confirmed fields in Bingham Co. with late blight. Genotyping of isolates have identified the strain as US 23. It is imperative that fieldmen and growers bring in any suspected late blight samples to the university offices at Idaho Falls or Aberdeen for confirmation and so that we can monitor the late blight strains causing the epidemic. A knowledge of the strains involved in the outbreak will allow us to make better fungicide recommendations to growers. All sample origin information will be kept confidential with only the county of origin being reported.

Since the strains from the current outbreak in Bingham county are US 23, we are dealing with a mefenoxam sensitive strain of late blight. The most effect product for the control of mefenoxam sensitive late blight strains is Ridomil Gold Bravo. Ridomil has been shown to have curative properties and may halt a late blight epidemic if it is applied early enough in the outbreak (less than 1% field infection).

In fields where only a few random late blight lesions have been found evenly distributed throughout field (0 - 1% foliar infection), an application of Ridomil Gold Bravo should be made followed by a systemic fungicide such as Revus, Forum, Curzate 60DF, Ranman, Tanos, Gavel or Previcur Flex 5 - 7 days after the first application. The field should then be monitored closely until the end of the season and protectant fungicide applications (EBDC or Chlorothalonil products) made every 7 days until harvest. A late season application of Gavel has been shown to provide additional protection from tuber blight.

In infected fields with one or more (up to 5) loci spreading from the edge of the field or from several centers within the field (1% overall field infection but locally heavily infected plants 5 - 10%), infected areas should be destroyed with Reglone or a similar vine killing herbicide. Destruction of infected areas within the crop with late blight should follow the rules that 30 rows either side of the newest lesions at the border of the late blight locus and 100 feet along the row (either side) are killed with Reglone or with Gramoxone. Although harsh, research has shown that the latent period between infection and symptom development is about seven days and although not visible plants within this area are already infected. An application of Ridomil Gold Bravo should then be applied as above and followed by an alternative fungicide 5 days later. Protectant fungicide applications should then be made every 7 days until harvest.
For more detailed information on late blight fungicide recommendations see the attached link (http://bit.ly/1LfZtmW)

For up to date information on potato diseases in Idaho and across the country follow us on twitter. http://www.twitter.com/potatodiseases