IT SEEMS AS THOUGH every year the potato industry in Idaho is faced with some kind of regional or statewide pest problem. In the past, the problems have been late blight, green peach aphid and more common but important pests such as early blight. In the future, we may be faced with something totally new, like zebra chip.

In an effort to combat these threats, Syngenta will again be sponsoring the Late Blight and Potato Pest Hotline, just as they have for the last 15 years. The hotline number for Idaho is (800) 791-7195, Oregon is (800) 705-3377 and Washington is (800) 984-7400.

This “early warning system” is important. There are a number of very destructive potato pest problems that must be considered to be “community” problems. What we mean here is that the only proper way to manage these diseases is for everyone in an affected area to be on board with the presence of the pest and the appropriate management protocols. The community concept is also important, since one characteristic of these pests is that they are readily spread from field to field. Since protection of the crop is usually the best management alternative and, in many cases the only way to manage these pests, an early warning system is mandatory.

An effective early warning system depends upon timely information. The earlier in a pest outbreak that such information is available, the better the situation for the entire community. The University of Idaho and others throughout the state of Idaho will be on the lookout for late blight and will be scouting for psyllids and the zebra chip disease they carry this summer.

Information on these serious pests, along with other crop and pest concerns, will be shared with the industry as soon as we have it. Alerts will be made on the hotline as well as on various websites, newsletters and email distribution lists. For diseases such as late blight and other pests, we have been depending on growers and private consultants to submit samples for diagnosis and confirmation before we make information available. If you suspect that you have late blight, psyllids, zebra chip or some other pest, it is important that we get a sample for diagnosis as soon as possible.

Confirmation of the pest by a reliable laboratory is also important. As all of us know, unsubstantiated rumors and other issues such as false positives or false negatives are wasteful and are best avoided. Late blight and other pests can sometimes be diagnosed on the spot. Other times, an overnight incubation may be necessary. For some problems, an accurate diagnosis may not be immediately available. When diagnosing ZC, for instance, a sophisticated laboratory (PCR) test is required to be absolutely sure ZC has been found.

The same goes for determining late blight strain type. Although a complicated lab test is usually not required to confirm the presence of late blight, such a test is required to identify which strain of the pathogen is present. Strain information is important to the industry and the scientific community to help us keep track of changes within the pest populations. This can help us better understand how diseases and insects move from one production area to another.

As in the past, information will be kept as confidential as possible and announcements concerning location will be kept to a county basis.

The Syngenta Late Blight and Potato Pest Hotline number for Idaho is (800) 791-7195. Just call in for the latest information on pests important to the Idaho Potato industry. The Hotline is updated as soon as important information becomes available. Management guidelines will also be provided.

Samples for diagnosis can be submitted to any of the following personnel at the location listed:

**Mike Thornton**
Parma R&E Center
29603 U of I Lane
Parma, ID 83660
(208) 722-6701
miket@uidaho.edu

**Nora Olsen**
Twin Falls and Kimberly Research and Extension Centers
(208) 736-3621 or (208) 423-6622
norao@uidaho.edu

**Jeff Miller**
Miller Research
426 East 200 North
Rupert, ID 83350
(208) 531-5124 or (208) 431-4420
jeff@millerresearch.com

**Phillip Wharton**
Aberdeen R & E Center
1693 S 2700 W
Aberdeen, ID 83210
(208) 397-4181
pwharton@uidaho.edu

**Phillip Nolte**
Idaho Falls R & E Center
1776 Science Center Dr.
Idaho Falls, ID 83402
(208) 529-8376
pnolte@uidaho.edu

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