

Tobacco Blue Mold In Lancaster, Producers Should Spray Now

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LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Tobacco Blue Mold this week has been confirmed on three operations in Lancaster County and samples have been sent for further testing to determine if the strain is the fungicide-resistant variety.

Lancaster County Extension Agent Robert Anderson on Wednesday said that growers need to adopt stringent fungicide application programs.

He also said that, while it may take some time for the tests to confirm pesticide resistance, based on the fact that other tobacco states have reported the resistant variety, and that two of the operators with the infected plants treated their beds earlier this year with Ridomil, the traditional fungicide used (although labeling for the newer version wasn't extended for tobacco beds), it seems likely that it is the resistant variety.

He said there is a "... 99-percent chance Ridomil will not control it."

Last year, resistant Blue Mold became a problem in the area ahead of when expected because of a grower importing transplant-sized tobacco from North Carolina.

The blue mold is a problem in the Southern states, where raising transplantable-sized tobacco for sale to farmers to plant in their fields is big business. It is believed by some in the tobacco industry that the continuous production in floating beds in the South and the dependence there on Ridomil helped to accelerate the resistance in the fungus.

Blue Mold does not overwinter in Pennsylvania, but its spores are carried into the state with storm fronts emanating from the South. A reporting system has been set up among cooperating tobacco raising states to track the progress of the disease as an early warning service.

Anderson said it is believed that Blue Mold arrived naturally this year via storms, though it is two to three weeks ahead of when expected.

"This year, no (out-of-state) transplants came into the county that I'm aware of," Anderson said. "We're assuming it blew in on storm fronts about two to three weeks ago. It's been in Kentucky about four weeks."

The timing is critical as many plants still have to be transplanted from beds to fields.

"The three locations (where Blue Mold has been confirmed) were not on a real stringent fungicide application program," Anderson said, "which reinforces the need for a stringent fungicide program, especially with the floating beds."

Anderson said that, at this point, growers can begin spraying their tobacco beds with one of three fungicides:

- For fields and beds, Acrobat MZ, which recently received a Sect. 18 label, can be applied at a rate of 1 to 2 teas-

poons per gallon of water.

- In tobacco beds, Ferbam, at a rate of 2 to 3 tablespoons per gallon.

- In tobacco beds, Diathane DF, at a rate of 1 teaspoon per gallon. All applications must ensure thorough coverage of the plant.

The fungicides are surface protectants and Blue Mold not only affects the part of the plant that it enters, but travels throughout the plant and becomes systemic.

After tobacco plants spike and are topped, for some reason still unknown, the spread of Blue Mold and its affect on the plant is curtailed.

Anderson said that if growers find they have bed plants with Blue Mold, and some have already been transplanted to the field, then the producer needs to spray in the field, as soon as they green up. He said that with the wind and dry weather up until this weekend, that some transplanted tobacco didn't look well.

He said that beds and any fields with plants displaying symptoms such as yellow spotting on the leaf top with a blue-gray mold growing under the leaf (best observed in the morning with the dew still on plants) should definitely be sprayed.

In some cases, growers may want to consider destroying plants and starting over.

"North Carolina recommends destroying beds if growers see it," Anderson said, adding, however, that advice most likely would not go over well in Pennsylvania. Instead, growers must decide if the problem is controllable and that a saleable crop can be raised.

"If, even after spraying, you see active mold, it has probably gone systemic, and when transplanted to the field, the plants grow crooked," Anderson said.

"If that happens, you probably should not even try to save it. I hope we get it early enough to keep it from becoming more of a problem."

As of this week, Anderson said

there is no emergency meeting scheduled to make producers aware of the problem. It is hoped that those who learn of the problem here or elsewhere tell other growers.

Depending upon weather, if there is to be a meeting, it would probably be in the near future, Anderson said.

Last year, in order to help producers protect their plants, Extension researchers in cooperation with a spray equipment manufacturer, designed a special spray head assembly in order to achieve

complete protection of the plant, which includes the under-leaf area.

Since plants are still small, such a boom sprayer-head assembly isn't needed, but producers need to make the fungicide applications thorough.

Anderson asked that those discovering Blue Mold in their plants to please call him so he can track the progress of the disease and help the industry protect itself. Anderson doesn't publicize the names of growers with the problem, but will help provide information to control it.

Those who discover Blue Mold in their plants should report it to Anderson at (717) 394-6851.

In other news, Anderson that overall plant diseases and problems have been fairly slight this year. He said there were some early insect problems, such as the flea beetle which attacks young corn, tobacco and potatoes, but he suspects that pest population is on the decline for the year and should soon be out of the way.

Other problems, such as pear thrips, have not seemed to have been a problem for fruit growers.

Subsidized Barley Sale Gets High-Level Action

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A letter sent to European Commission President Jacques Santer by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright protested the sale of subsidized European barley to a U.S. company. A follow-up announcement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that it will subsidize 30,000 metric tons of U.S. barley exports to Algeria, Cyprus, and Norway under the Export Enhancement Program (EEP) underscores the gravity of the European action, according to National Farmers Union *NFU).

"The fact that the state department has gotten involved in an agricultural trade issue indicates the seriousness with which it views the European use of export subsidies to sell agricultural products to the United States," said NFU Government Relations Vice President Tom Buis.

Subsidization of exports is not a new European practice, but until a month ago, the subsidies were used only for sales of agricultural products to countries with deficits of the commodity being transacted. Last month's news of the purchase of 30,000 metric tons of European barley by a U.S. company through use of a \$50-per-

metric-ton export subsidy brought cries of protest from agricultural producers. The United States is a net exporter of barley and many of the other commodities exported by European countries using subsidies.

"The use of export subsidies to sell to a market which has a surplus of that commodity underscores the shortcomings in our current international trade agreements," Buis said. "No farmer I know objects to fair trade, but we cannot be pitting our farmers against the treasuries of foreign governments."

NFU is pleased that the subsi-

dized barley sale is being given the highest level of attention and that the Department of State is working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Trade Representative to determine an appropriate response to the European Union action. The Europeans are contending that the sale is legal under current trading rules, but such action has never been tested.

"This is a very serious situation, the outcome of which has ramifications for all U.S. commodities. It must be dealt with immediately and also should be a top priority for future trade negotiations," Buis said.

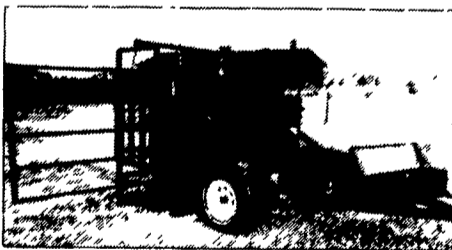


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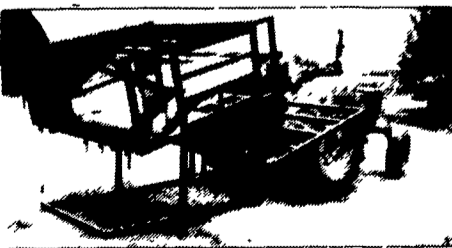
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