

# Blue Mold Alert Update

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Blue mold has been present in the Lancaster County tobacco crop for about four weeks. Up until this past week, it was confined mostly to tobacco beds and tobacco greenhouses. The past five or more days have provided weather conditions favorable for the spread of blue mold.

In order for blue mold to survive and thrive, it needs tobacco, tobacco leaves that are wet for prolonged periods, and cloudy weather.

Lancaster County's weather this past week has brought a rash of reports of blue mold in the field. As the number of reports increase, the number of potential sources of new infection has ex-

panded greatly.

In addition, some of the fields which have blue mold have gone systemic. Once systemic, blue mold makes the tobacco plant unharvestable.

Blue mold can be controlled with frequent applications of approved fungicides. The only EPA-approved fungicides for tobacco are Dithane DF and Acrobat MZ.

Acrobat was recently granted an emergency use label under section 18. For best results, these fungicides need to be applied before blue mold becomes established.

Spray schedules for fungicide applications range from 5 to 7 days depending on weather conditions. Both fungicides for blue

mold control require complete coverage of the tobacco plant with the fungicide.

As the tobacco grows, sprayers will need to be modified to include drop nozzles, high pressures, and be capable of applying large volumes of water to adequately protect the crop.

Where trade names are used no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by cooperative extension is implied. Although every attempt is made to produce information that is complete, timely, and accurate, the pesticide user bears the responsibility of consulting the pesticide label and adhering to those directions.

## Lancaster Farming OPINION

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provide agricultural economic development incentives and make sure rezoning requests adhere to their farmland protection goals.

Under the proposed approach, strategic farmland would be saved while growth is directed to land of less environmental and agricultural importance. Sprawl could be slowed, if not stopped.

I was born and raised on my family's farm in Baltimore County. Farming has been my life. And I want it to be my children's life and their children's too. But we are at a crossroads when it comes to the farmers and farmland of this state. Do we continue along our present path, knowing that in just a few generations, sprawl will have blanketed most of Maryland and a truly significant natural resource will have been lost? Or do we consider newer, more effective farmland protection and growth management strategies and techniques than those that have served us until now? Do we become better focused and targeted in our farmland protection efforts and adopt the tools and techniques of this model program?

For me the choice is clear. For me, saving farmland is the surest sprawl stopper of them all.

—Wayne McGinnis, a fourth-generation Baltimore County, Maryland, farmer, is board chairman of Chesapeake Farms for the Future and also chairman of the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Board.

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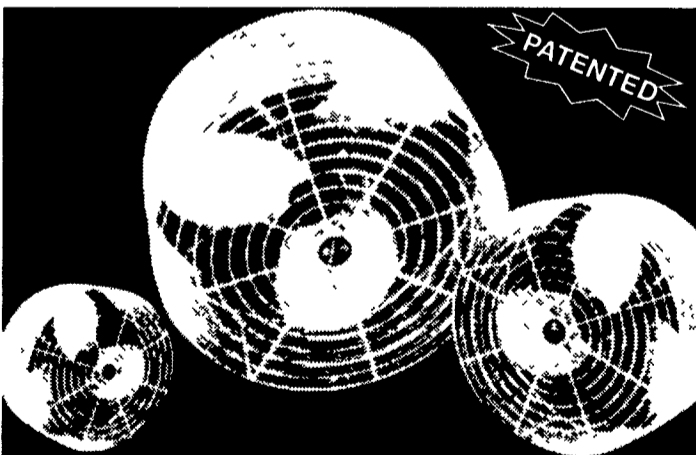


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