

Hotspot Hunting Sign-Up Under Way

CAMP HILL (Cumberland Co.) — Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is reminding farmers that the deadline for sign-up in this year's "hotspot" deer hunt is Thursday, Aug. 31.

Farmers suffering deer damage to crops who wish to enroll in the program should contact their regional Pennsylvania Game Commission office by that date.

The "hotspot" program, known officially as the Deer Damage Area Program, allows a hunter with an antlerless license for that county to harvest an antlerless deer on an enrolled farm during the regular firearms ant-

lered deer or "buck" hunting season. This year's season runs from Nov. 27 to Dec. 8.

Farmers interested in the "hotspot" program will be visited by a wildlife conservation officer this fall and given the opportunity to enroll in one of the agency's public access programs. The farmers will be given green signs which will alert hunters that identified areas contain too many deer and are open for public hunting.

Hunters will be able to obtain listings of properties enrolled in the "hotspot" program by sending a stamped, self-addressed, business-size envelope to the re-

gional office for the county in which the hunter holds an antlerless deer license.

For more information about enrollment in the "hotspot hunt" program, farmers should contact the Game Commission regional offices at the following toll-free numbers:

- Northwest region — (814) 432-3187 — for Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango, and Warren counties.
- Southwest region — (724) 238-9523 — for Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington, and Westmoreland

counties.

- Northcentral region — (717) 398-4744 — for Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Lycoming, McKean, Potter, Tioga, and Union counties.
- Southcentral region — (814) 643-1831 — for Adams, Bedford, Blair, Cumberland, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin, Perry, and Snyder counties.
- Northeast region — (717) 675-1143 — for Bradford, Carbon, Columbia, Lacka-

wanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Montour, Northumberland, Pike, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Wayne, and Wyoming counties.

- Southeast region — (215) 926-3136 — for Berks, Bucks, Chester, Dauphin, Delaware, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, Schuylkill, and York counties.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is a nongovernmental, statewide farm organization representing more than 28,000 farm and rural families.

USDA Launches New Online Report On Ocean Container Market

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The USDA recently announced the publication of Agricultural Ocean Transportation Trends, a semiannual, online report that provides information on the ocean container market's cost and service trends.

"We created this report in response to a growing need among agricultural shippers for reliable information and assistance in the area of containerized shipping," said Kathleen Merrigan, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. "It will give them the best, most up-to-date information that we can provide to help them remain competitive and deal with legislative changes in the ocean shipping market."

Information in the report was developed using data reported monthly in the AMS Ocean Rate Bulletin, which tracks agricultural container rates to most Asian and some European countries and covers high-valued agricultural commodities. The data are used to generate

monthly container rate trends in the ocean container market to provide shippers and carriers with a better view of how the market is responding to changes in trade patterns or U.S. regulations.

The report also provides a perspective on the new confidential service contracting procedures that came into effect May 1, 1999. This information and other factors which affect, or are expected to affect, the market are collected from interviews with agricultural shippers that control more than 150,000 40-foot equivalent units.

Agricultural Ocean Transportation Trends can be viewed on the Internet at www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/agott.

For more information, contact Heidi Reichert, Shipper and Exporter Assistance, Transportation and Marketing, Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, Room 1217-S, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0267; (202) 690-2325 or e-mail Heidi.Reichert@usda.gov.

Late Blight Could Pose Problem In Fields

Eric Oesterlins

Westmoreland County Agent

The plentiful rainfall and cooler temperatures have made this a much better growing season than we have seen in recent years, especially compared to last year's drought.

However, this weather has also been ideal for some fungus diseases.

Late blight has the most potential to do severe damage to the home vegetable garden. It only affects potatoes and tomatoes but it can destroy a planting of either one of these vegetables in a week or two of wet weather.

This same disease caused the failure of Irish potato crops 150 years ago, resulting in the infamous Irish potato famine and subsequent mass emigration of Irish to America.

No, I don't expect to see mass starvation in western Pennsylvania because of late blight, but I would not be surprised to see a lot of very disappointed gardeners. After all, what single crop is more important to vegetable gardeners than tomatoes?

Late blight can destroy entire plantings of tomatoes and make the fruit useless. You may remember the outbreak of late blight in 1994 that killed plants and rotted tomatoes in local gardens from mid-August on.

The potential for an even more destructive outbreak is present this year. The disease has already been positively diagnosed in tomatoes in Westmoreland and Allegheny counties and potatoes in a commercial potato planting in Crawford County. Since the spores can blow 50 miles or more during wet weather, we have to assume innoculum for this disease is everywhere and wet weather makes conditions ideal for infection.

Symptoms of the disease include dark spots on leaves and

stems, often with a light green margin around the dark spot. In wet weather there can be a whitish downy growth on the spots, especially on the undersides of the leaves. During wet weather the spots will extend rapidly right across leaf veins and up and down stems. With a week or two of wet weather, the entire plant can look like it has been scorched. The disease shows up on the fruit as a firm chocolate brown rot.

So what can gardeners do? The only protection is spraying fungicides on a weekly basis. In order of effectiveness from most effective to least, the suggested active ingredients are chlorothalonil, mancozeb, maneb, and copper. Trade names include:

- Chlorothalonil: Ortho Vegetable Disease Control, Daconil, and others.
- Mancozeb: Manzate 200, Dithane M-45 and others.
- Maneb: Maneb. Copper fungicides: Check garden centers for trade names.

Remember that tomatoes and potatoes must be listed on the label for the product to be legal on these crops. Organic gardeners who don't want to use "chemical" fungicides may be willing to use a copper containing material. Copper is fairly effective but not as good as the other ingredients. It is an arbitrary distinction — copper is not as effective nor is it any safer.

Fungicides are preventive, not curative, and these are not systemic chemicals, so coverage must be thorough and repeated weekly. Once infection is widespread in the garden, it will be too late to save the planting, and it probably should be destroyed to minimize spread to gardens of neighbors and friends.

Unless the weather does an about-face, gardeners will be bringing in samples and asking

questions about late blight. If gardeners want to harvest a good crop of tomatoes and/or potatoes this August and September, they need to be spraying to protect their plantings.

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