

Potato Cyst Nematode (PCN)
Stakeholder Update
(5/01/06)

SITUATION SUMMARY

On April 19, 2006 officials of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) announced the detection of potato cyst nematode (PCN), *Globodera pallida*, a major pest of potato crops. This is the first detection of the pest in the United States. The microscopic nematodes pose no threat to human health and never actually enter the tuber, but can reduce the yield of potatoes through root damage. There is no evidence that the quality of potato tubers grown in Idaho has been affected. APHIS and ISDA are implementing actions to determine if the pest is distributed in fields in Idaho and, if so, prevent movement of PCN to uninfested areas. Officials are working cooperatively with the potato industry to provide Best Management Practices to deal with potato cyst nematode issues.

SURVEY

Program personnel are surveying fields and facilities that may be associated with the detected PCN. More than 1,000 soil samples have been collected from two adjoining suspect fields in eastern Idaho. Samples collected were sent to the University of Idaho Nematology Laboratory for initial screening and diagnostics. So far, none of the additional soil samples has tested PCN positive.

The source of the infestation has not been identified. The original soil sample came from ISDA-sampled tare dirt. Scientists conclusively identified 2 cysts as PCN in that sample. Additional cysts from that same sample have not been conclusively confirmed as PCN. No cysts have been discovered in any other field survey or sample to date. ISDA and APHIS are sampling suspect fields to trace the tare dirt sample to a field of origin so that it can be determined if the field is infested. Officials are also investigating the seed sources for the suspect fields.

REGULATION

APHIS emergency action notifications (EANS) and ISDA restrictions have been imposed at suspect sites. These state and federal actions restrict the movement of soil, plants, plant material and farm equipment which may have been exposed to the potato cyst nematode and is are intended to prevent the introduction and dissemination of the pest. To date, these restrictions have been imposed in Bingham, Bonneville, and Jefferson counties, but limited to seven sites which include fields, cellars and potato handling facilities. Previously restricted fresh packed product has been released to move in commerce. Potatoes and potato product are moving normally in domestic commerce. Japan, Canada, Mexico and Korea have placed restrictions on potato imports.

PERSONNEL

Approximately 50 APHIS and ISDA personnel are working on the cooperative control program at temporary facilities.

TRADE

ISDA, APHIS and potato industry officials are working with trade representatives from Canada, Japan, Korea, and Mexico to lift trade restrictions.