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PINK ROT OF POTATOES



Pink rot is a fungal disease that occurs sporadically in many soils worldwide wherever potatoes are grown. The disease develops in soils approaching saturation from poor drainage, excessive precipitation, or irrigation. Tuber decay is most rapid at 25 °C. Infected tubers are usually found in wet, low-lying areas during harvest, and symptom development occurs soon after tubers are placed in storage facilities. The fungus survives in soil for several years. Red-skinned potatoes are generally more susceptible than russet varieties. When cut and exposed to air, recently infected surfaces change from cream-colored to salmon pink in 20-30 minutes and then to black in 1 hour.

- Plant clean, disease-free seed.
- Carry out a regular 3-year crop rotation.
- Plant potatoes in well-drained soil.
- Prior to harvesting, check low areas in the field and rogue diseased plants and tubers.
- Avoid harvesting during wet conditions and kill vines at least 2 weeks before harvesting. Delay harvest until the pulp temperature is between 7 and 10 °C.
- Tubers with significant pink rot should be harvested and stored separately for immediate grading and marketing.
- Grade out rotted tubers before placing them in storage. In storage, turn on ventilation systems immediately to keep air moving through the pile in order to dry any rotting tubers. Cool tubers as quickly as possible. Keep the humidity low to prevent secondary bacterial infection from developing. The fungus is usually inactive at temperatures below 40 °F (4.4 °C).
- Fungicides applied in-furrow at planting or applied to the foliage during early tuberization can reduce pink rot losses.

For chemical control and other guidelines, please refer to the recent issue of the Potato Crop, Variety, Weed and Pest Control Guide for New Brunswick.