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POTATO ROT AND SLED SELECTION FOR 1916

Potato rot was very general throughout the Province of Ontario during the season of 1915. Weather conditions were such as to favor the development and spread of all the different causes of the rot. The wet, backward summer favored the development of "blackleg" which caused the loss of many hills of young potato plants and the wet fall favored the development of the "Late Blight" the "Fusarium Wilt" and "Bacterial Soft Rot." As a consequence many tubers were rotting in the ground at harvest time, and later, many tubers rotted in storage either with the wet or the dry rot.

Without doubt many tubers that are intended for seed purpose for 1916 will be affected more or less with one or other of these diseases. The weather conditions during 1916 may not be so favorable for the development and spread of these diseases as during 1915, but to get a satisfactory return for the work and expense involved in planting and cultivating the potato crop, it will be necessary first to carefully examine the tubers that are to be used as seed, discarding those which are not thoroughly sound, and secondly, to plant on well-drained land that was not used for potatoes during 1915.

PRECAUTIONS TO BE TAKEN IN SELECTING SEED POTATOES AGAINST BLACKLEG

The black discoloration and rot of the lower part of potato stems commonly known as Blackleg, may be induced by either one or two causes or by a combination of both. One of these is the fungus *Rhizoctonia*, which grows mostly on the outside of the stem, and the other is a bacillus which develops within the tissue of the stem.

The *Rhizoctonia* fungus may be seen in the resting condition on the surface of perfectly sound potato tubers. It is there seen as black or dark brown spots, irregular in shape and size. These spots look so much like small pieces of soil sticking to the skin of the potato that they are apt to be overlooked. If, however, the tuber is dipped in water, these spots will appear black in color and they will wash off in the way that soil will, but on scraping them with the thumb nail it will be found that they stick fairly hard to the potato skin.

When a potato so affected is planted, these black specks germinate at the same time that the sprouts begin to shoot from the eyes of the tuber and then the fungus spreading over the surface of the potato and through the soil attacks the young sprout, producing there a brown canker discoloration which continues to grow in area as the potato shoot grows. This gives one type of Blackleg, and if the plant so affected does not die down, the

disease is followed by the condition known as "Little Potato" and "Aerial Potato" when large numbers of small irregular-shaped potatoes are produced in bunches near the surface of the soil and also upon the stems above ground.

Potato tubers that show the black specks above described should either not be used for seed or if they are used they should be previously soaked for three hours in a 1:2000 solution of Corrosive Sublimate, in a crock or wooden vessel. (Note:—Corrosive Sublimate is a strong poison and it will corrode iron vessels).

The other type of Blackleg, a soft rotting type, is due to certain species of bacteria getting into the stem either from an infected seed tuber or from infected soil.

There is no remedial treatment for a seed tuber that is affected with this type of Blackleg. Any seed tuber which shows brown discolorations either on the outside or in the interior when cut should not be planted, as these discolorations may indicate the presence of the bacilli which cause the disease.

AGAINST SOFT ROT

Soft rot of potato tubers in the late summer or fall may be due to anyone of several causes. It may be due to a primary invasion of the growing potatoes by a soft rot bacillus coming either from infected soil or from the affected seed tuber; it may develop as the result of a secondary invasion of the growing potatoes by decay bacteria following a primary attack by the *Fusarium* fungus which causes a wilt of the tops and a dry rot of the tubers in storage; or it may develop as a secondary invasion of growing potatoes by bacteria following an attack of the "Late Blight" fungus. All these different types of rot are indicated in the seed tuber by brown discolorations of the tissue, both on the outside and the inside. These discolorations vary somewhat for the different diseases but there is no treatment of so affected seed that is of any use. All such affected tubers should be destroyed.

NOTE: Spraying with Bordeaux mixture several times during the growing season will tend to prevent the spread of "Early Blight" and "Late Blight," but it will not affect the spread of the *Fusarium* Wilt, Dry Rot or Bacterial Soft Rot. These later diseases develop within the tissues of the roots, tubers and stems, and cannot be reached by the spray. Therefore, take every precaution in the selection of the seed potatoes, and see that only sound tubers with no blemishes are planted.

For further information apply to J. C. STECKLEY, District Representative, Ontario Department of Agriculture, Newmarket.

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