

INSECT MONITORING REPORTS

Report for July 12, 2013

BEET LEAFHOPPERS (BLH): We found BLH at almost all of our trapping sites across the Columbia Basin this week. Mattawa and the Royal Slope continue to be the “hotspots” for BLH, with average trap counts of 20 BLH per card and 25 BLH per card respectively. Go to the pest data mapping section below to see all of the BLH trap counts for this week.

Beet leafhoppers are important pests because they transmit BLTVA, a phytoplasma that causes purple top disease in potatoes. In the Columbia Basin, the first spring generation of BLH usually migrates towards potato fields in late May and early June, with a peak flight in late June. Yellow sticky traps placed near potato fields are one way to monitor BLH. Information about setting up traps and identifying BLH can be found in the article, *“Beet Leafhopper Monitoring with Yellow Sticky Cards”*. Treatment thresholds based on BLH numbers on traps have not been established, but we know that the risk of infection increases as BLH populations become large. If the numbers on traps build up to 40 or more BLH per week, then it is probably time to be concerned. A typical weekly catch during peak BLH activity is 100. Eliminating weed hosts (wild mustards, Russian thistle, kochia) in areas surrounding potato fields is an important cultural management approach for BLH. Potato growers may also select cultivars that are less susceptible to purple top (Ranger, Umatilla, and Norkotah are considered highly susceptible; Russet Burbank is susceptible; and Alturas and Shepody are moderately susceptible). A number of insecticides are labeled for use on potatoes to control leafhoppers. Systemic at-planting insecticides, especially those with longer residual activity applied at the maximum allowed rate, have been shown to provide some early season control of BLH. Results may vary depending on the product used, application rate, soil and environmental conditions, and insect pressure. Foliar insecticides may also be used to control BLH. These are usually applied in May, June, and sometimes July. Insecticides with long residual activity (10-14 days) are preferred. If you apply a non-systemic insecticide, it may be necessary to shorten the application interval during periods of rapid plant growth to ensure adequate plant coverage. Remember to always read and follow instructions on the pesticide label. For more information about managing BLH, visit *IPM Guidelines for Insects and Mites in ID, OR, and WA Potatoes* and the *2013 PNW Insect Management Handbook*.

POTATO PSYLLIDS There was a significant increase in the number of adult potato psyllids found on yellow sticky cards across the Columbia Basin this week. We found a total of 21 adult potato psyllids, either 1 or 2 psyllids per card, in fields near Plymouth, Othello, Basin City, Royal City, George, and on the Kahlotus Hwy. We also identified 19 potato psyllids on sticky cards brought to us by crop advisers from fields near Connell, Eltopia, Pasco, and Warden. We have also been finding them in sentinel plots near Othello, Pasco, Paterson, Yakima, and Prosser. In other words, potato psyllids are being seen in potato fields across the Columbia Basin. All of these psyllids will be tested to determine if they carry the bacterium (Lso) that causes zebra chip. So far, none of the potato psyllids that have been submitted for testing this spring have come back positive for Lso. If you find potato psyllids, please let us know by sending an email to cwohle@wsu.edu. We can help you submit psyllids for Lso testing.

Potato psyllids are important pests mostly because they can transmit a bacterium (*Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum*) to potatoes that causes zebra chip disease (ZC). This disease reduces both yield and tuber quality and has led to serious economic losses in some regions. ZC was first detected in potato fields in the Columbia Basin in 2011, and occurred again in 2012. Yellow sticky cards are recommended for detecting psyllid migration into an area. The cards should be placed inside the field, near the field edge, and just above the canopy level. It is best to have five or more yellow sticky cards around the field. For more information, read [Psyllid Monitoring with Yellow Sticky Cards](#). Another method for sampling adult psyllids is to use an inverted leaf blower with a mesh net secured to the end of the cylinder (see photo on the sidebar). This method is better for detecting low population densities than the sticky cards. Operate the machine (in vacuum mode) above the potato plants for at least 5 minutes, 5-10 feet from the edge of the field, and then carefully remove the net from the end of the cylinder. It helps to transfer the insects from the net to a plastic bag that you can seal, and then look for the tiny winged adults. If you place the bag in the freezer for a while, you can slow the buzzing insects down which will make it easier to scan the bag. Other life stages of the psyllid may be found by collecting several leaves (mid-plant) from the outer rows of the field, and then scanning the underside (with a hand-lens) for the tiny nymphs and eggs. It is also recommended to scout for psyllids in cull piles and volunteer potatoes. For more information about psyllids, including insect identification, monitoring, and control recommendations, read [Biology and Management of Potato Psyllid in Pacific Northwest Potatoes](#) and [Potato Psyllid Vector of Zebra Chip Disease in the Pacific Northwest](#).

APHIDS: We found winged green peach aphids in 50% of the fields we were able to sample, and wingless green peach aphids in 15% of the fields. Potato growers should be monitoring fields for aphids now, because they are likely to be there. Fields should be scouted at least weekly. It is recommended that ten locations per 100 acres are checked. Use a beat sheet or bucket to sample; we use a bucket, which is placed underneath plants and then the plants are shaken vigorously to dislodge the aphids (see photo on the sidebar).

Aphids are important pests because they transmit several important potato viruses, especially potato leafroll virus (PLRV) and potato virus Y (PVY). Green peach aphids are the most important vector of PLRV, which has caused substantial yield and tuber quality losses in the Columbia Basin. PLRV causes net necrosis in some cultivars, an unacceptable tuber defect in processing potatoes. PVY can also result in significant yield losses, and some strains cause tuber defects. Potato growers should monitor fields for aphids at least once a week, because early recognition and control of aphids is the best tactic in limiting spread of potato viruses. Current recommendations are to treat long-season storage potatoes as soon as wingless aphids are detected. Low tolerances have been established because even a low incidence of seed borne PVY and PLRV can spread rapidly if aphids go unchecked.

POTATO TUBERWORM (PTW): Moths were found at four locations this week in the lower Columbia Basin of Washington.

Potato tuberworm (PTW) was first recognized as an important pest of potatoes in the southern Columbia Basin in 2003. PTW larvae feed on tubers causing damage that renders them unmarketable. Potato growers with fields south of Connell, WA are recommended to pay close attention to regional trapping data, and should deploy pheromone traps. Infestations of PTW are highly localized, and it is risky to conclude too much from traps that may be several miles away. Information about setting up traps and identifying PTW moths can be found in the article, *"Tuberworm Monitoring with Pheromone Traps"*. Trap counts from mid-season to harvest are particularly important to watch. Pre-harvest control measures may be warranted in fields where PTW moths in pheromone traps are found to be increasing every week, especially in August-October.

LOOPERS: We are continuing to find cabbage loopers in a few of the potato fields we monitor. The larvae develop very quickly on potatoes, in as few as eight days. Consequently, there can be several generations per year. Be sure the larvae are present before treating the field with insecticides, i.e. don't just look for feeding damage. Feeding damage may not be noticed until the larvae are fully developed, and it won't do you any good to treat if they are mostly adults by the time you make the application. Keep in mind that large larvae are more difficult to control with insecticides than smaller larvae.

BENEFICIAL INSECTS: Big-eyed bugs were found in 85% of the potato fields we monitored this week, and damsel bugs were found in 32% of the fields. These are good insects to have in the fields, because they are voracious predators. Unfortunately, they can be very susceptible to certain insecticides, especially the broad-spectrum insecticides. Dr. Bill Snyder, WSU Entomologist, has found that big-eyed bugs can be 6 xs more abundant in fields sprayed with selective insecticides compared to fields treated with broad-spectrum insecticides.