



growers' advice

Fight against Blight

ISSUE 11: HARVEST



Harvesting conditions and techniques can have an influence on how blight may affect the storability of a crop.

Haulm Destruction

- Do not harvest the crop until **all** of the haulm, including the stems, has been dead for a minimum of 14 days. This will reduce the risk of tuber infection from any infected haulm during the harvesting process.
- It is commonly advised that the harvest of blighted stocks should be delayed as long as possible after desiccation to allow blighted tubers to rot prior to harvest. The success of this approach will depend on soil temperature and moisture content during the delay period. Blighted tubers may decay slowly if soils are dry and cool.

Rain / Irrigation

- Whilst you can have no control over the weather, irrigating too close to harvest will make lifting conditions difficult, which may result in increased crop damage (see below). Irrigation may also increase the spread of any blight spores down to the tubers.
- Try not to harvest blighted stocks during periods of wet weather. This can help prevent the spread of blight from any infected tubers and reduce the risk of secondary bacterial rotting. This will also speed up the dry curing phase upon entry to store, which will help reduce the risk of any storage spread of the disease.

Damage

- Blight spores do not require wounds in which to enter tubers (they can enter through lenticels and eyes). However, reduction in damage to tubers will reduce the number of entry points for these spores to invade the tuber. It will also help reduce the opportunity of spread from blight induced soft rots in store.

Tuber return

- Harvest as many tubers as possible to minimise rogue volunteers (groundkeepers). This will help to reduce potential sources of inoculum leading to infection of subsequent growing crops.

For more information on blight control at harvest, please consult your local BASIS registered advisor.