

Best practice for the control of potato outgrade piles

Minimise the size of any pile. Over/under sized tubers and surface defects should have a market, piles should include only that material that cannot be fed to cattle, i.e. rots and greens. Outgrades should not be left in potato boxes as they are difficult to treat and may become difficult to remove once well sprouted.

Don't let outgrade piles get to this stage. Best practice is to sheet or treat.

Mapping late blight outbreaks, as part of the fight against blight campaign, has demonstrated that outgrade piles remain significant sources of blight in crops.



In addition to blight, outgrade piles can act as sources of aphid-borne virus and other diseases.

Uncontrolled outgrade piles of whatever size can cost you money.

Whether there is obvious blight or not, all out-grade piles should be dealt with in the same way. Fungicide and aphicide programmes can be jeopardised by a failure to tackle outgrade piles. Blighted plants release millions of air-borne spores that can travel, and remain viable, for miles under dull and damp conditions. However, the closer that an outgrade pile is to a crop the greater the risk of infection.

Best practice is to adopt a zero tolerance approach to sprouting and production of green foliage on outgrade piles by tackling it early; preferably covering with black plastic sheeting

If sheeting is not used early and the outgrade pile has been allowed to sprout you should spray the pile as soon as possible with Reglone (diquat) or glyphosate; **ALWAYS READ THE PESTICIDE PRODUCT LABEL.**

Cover the pile with black plastic sheeting and ensure that the edges are sealed to prevent the escape of spores and reduce the impact of wind or the likelihood of animals tearing the sheeting.

Reglone now has an **Extension of Authorisation** for minor use in the UK (formerly known as **SOLA**) for use on outgrade piles. **You must be in possession of, and have read, the full Extension of Authorisation (20111882)** which can be downloaded from the following website:

<https://secure.pesticides.gov.uk/offlabels/>

If Reglone or glyphosate treatment is used alone without sheeting then repeated herbicide applications are likely to be required because of the delayed emergence from tubers at depth in the pile. This is a good reason to level off the outgrade pile, prior to any haulm being produced.

In addition to improved health and safety during application, the period of emergence will be considerably reduced and fewer herbicide treatments will be required. In a shallower pile an additional advantage is that any frost will kill a higher percentage of the tubers.

Applying glyphosate to established haulm is a high-risk strategy. Potato Council-funded work has shown that blight spores continue to be released during the slow haulm kill with this herbicide. It is not good practice to mix Reglone and glyphosate as the Reglone can inhibit the systemic movement of glyphosate to the tubers. Glyphosate is slower acting than Reglone and treated sprouts can still pose a blight risk.

You should check outgrade piles regularly throughout the growing season and encourage neighbours to control their outgrade piles.

Research carried out by SAC has shown that blighted tubers may not always show blight symptoms. It is therefore best to assume blight is present in the outgrade pile and to use Reglone as the preferred chemical for a quicker haulm kill.

Location of outgrade piles

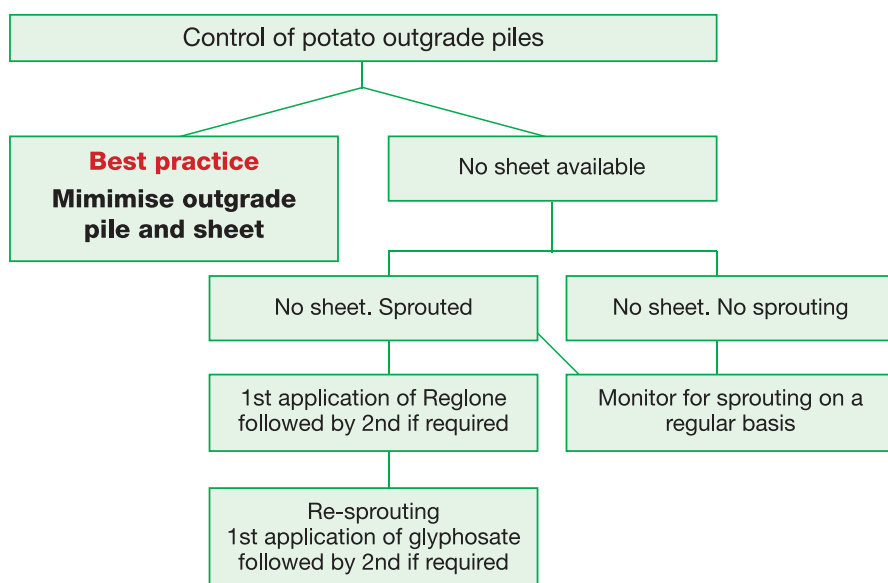
Outgrade piles should be accessible but well away from your own, and your neighbour's potato crops and farm buildings. Try to site piles on land not intended for any crop, especially any potato crop, in the future.

Don't risk polluting watercourses. Locate piles away from ditches, rivers, groundwater, etc. Outgrade piles should not be placed on a non-permeable surface. There is a risk of point source pollution to water courses from the breakdown of tubers and any chemical used to control haulm growth.

If you require any specific advice about your own situation please contact your agronomist.

Summary of best practice to minimise effects of outgrade piles

- Minimise what goes into the outgrade pile.
- Keep the outgrade pile low to increase any frost kill and reduce delayed emergence at depth.
- Sheet and check regularly.
- If sheeting is not an option, use Reglone when green material is first seen as blight infections may not be visible.
- When new growth is seen, repeat with the second application of Reglone. Then move on to the two applications of glyphosate.
- Both Reglone and glyphosate are only effective on green material.
- Remember sheeting is the best practice method as this has a zero tolerance for green material.



Agricultural waste management regulations

Since 2005 the composting, storage, and disposal of plant tissue and other organic wastes on land at the farm where they are produced requires an exemption under the waste management regulations in England, Wales and Scotland. Further information is available at:

England & Wales	Environment Agency - www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/sectors/32777.aspx
Scotland	Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) www.sepa.org.uk/land/agriculture/agricultural_waste_guidance.aspx

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 Visit the Potato Council's fight against blight homepage at www.potato.org.uk/blight

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