



Update to industry on progress since January National Virus Forum

In January this year an initial National Virus Forum was held at Stoneleigh Park to address a prevalence of virus in ware potato crops during the previous season. The meeting was attended by a range of stakeholders, including trade associations, government bodies, research organisations and independent agronomists.

During the meeting a set of actions and timelines was established. Although these timelines have been disrupted by the subsequent arrival of Covid-19, industry and stakeholders have been continuing to address what led to the initial impacts and working towards solutions to prevent a recurrence.

It is apparent that the virus challenges must be approached as a broad industry issue, and that collective responsibility is needed to minimise its impact. There has been widespread industry engagement since the January meeting to better understand where issues exist, and improvements can be made.

A key discussion point in the January meeting was the role of Post Burn-down virus testing (tuber indexing). Work is still ongoing to fully understand how a consistent approach to the interpretation of this testing can be achieved, and therefore how it can complement the visual inspection regime. Many growers and sellers of seed are voluntarily undertaking tuber indexing in 2020. For further information on this we would recommend the following Webinar from FERA:

<https://info.fera.co.uk/potato-virus-testing-webinar-watch-online>

In addition, practical guidance has been comprehensively overhauled this year and is available at <https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/aphid-and-virus-potatoes>

In the short term both the BPTA and NFU have made proposals to APHA regarding the running of the Seed Potato Classification Scheme (SPCS) in England & Wales in 2021. The proposals put to APHA relate to both seed virus incidence and respond to changes to the scheme made by APHA in 2020 as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.

Finally, we would encourage all growers to continue developing their supply chain relationships, and particular their knowledge of the source of their seed and its provenance.