

# National Virus Forum

## 3rd meeting Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March

### Teams meeting

Attendees: Mark Taylor (Chair), Alex Godfrey, Rupert Weaver, Andy Curtis, Gerard Croft, Jon Rooke, David Michie, Martin Stothard, Sophie Bambridge, Paul Wood, Gary Collins, Will Shields, Graham Tomalin, Eric Anderson, Darren Mackie, Adrian Fox, Christophe Lacomme, Jon Pickup, Lynne Bradley, Helen Fasham, Simon Anning, Laura Stevens, Sharon Matthews-Berry, Antonia Walker, Piers Bolton, Larissa Collins,

Apologies: James Lee, Phil Burgess, Sandy McGowan, Jon Sarup, Richard McIntosh, Jeff Beever, David Nelson, John Adams-Williams, Mike Wilson, Rob Clayton, Louise Wright, Colin Ross, Jane Thomas, Graham Nichols, Miranda Reynolds, Triona Davey, Christian Bradley

#### Agenda

- Updates on key activity and progress
- Regulatory Sub-group – Gerard Croft & Alex Godfrey. (Slides and summary included in notes below)
- DEFRA – latest thinking on legislative change & provisional recommendation – Helen Fasham (verbal update)
- Inspection & certification – SASA Christophe Lacomme & Jon Pickup, Fera Lynne Bradley \*
- Sampling & Testing – SASA Christophe Lacomme & Fera Adrian Fox \*
- Aphid monitoring and YWT – Fera, Larissa Collins \*
- Technical update Scotland – Eric Anderson Scottish Agronomy\*
- Technical update England – Graham Tomalin VCS Potatoes
- On-farm trials and management approaches – Sophie Bambridge B&C Potatoes \*

#### General comments

- Recognition of sub-group and industry activity to support awareness of virus
  - No complacency – whilst virus levels have reduced the threat remains
  - Must make best use of 6-Step (Seed growers) & 4-Step (ware growers) guides
  - Recognition of the continued loss of PPP's and the opportunity with Mineral Oils
- Still require collaboration and coordination of activity for the National Crop i.e., Monitoring and forecasting of aphids.
- Must maintain every route of KE and information to ensure effective cascade into industry

#### Notes & Actions

- Sharing of Presentations (\* indicates shared) – this was done both prior and post the meeting. Please read these notes in conjunction with relevant presentations.
- **Regulatory Sub-Group**
  - Highlighted findings following PIR of the 2015 (England) Regulations
  - Weakness in the visual nature of the SPCS
  - Industry desire to see the SPCS evolve
  - Research required to verify the reliability of laboratory-based seed tuber virus testing
  - Maximum period between final inspection & complete desiccation?
  - Review of the Regulations
  - Options Discussed
    - Tightening of field tolerances at certified grades
    - Use of statutory Tuber Indexing based on a risk assessment
    - Development of a Risk Matrix for (b)
    - Review of Isolation distances from possible virus sources
    - Free access for PHSI's to nearby crops to assess risk
  - Recommendations
    - Maintain 'Burn-Down requirement if >1/3 of entered grade tolerance found at final inspection.

- Enable the applicant, in the event of failure to adequately desiccate the stock, to choose either to market the seed at the lowest possible grade (B) or accept the grade based upon a tuber index result carried out by APHA
    - Regulatory changes to enable PHSI access to adjacent crops
    - Development of the Risk Matrix for future use
    - Equate UK with the EU regulation that enables, under exceptional circumstances, seed outside of statutory tolerances to be marketed.
  - Follow-up actions that need to be explored
    - Given the increased Virus pressure within Scotland should we be looking at tighter regulations within protected regions for seed production in respect to virus reservoirs (ware, groundkeepers etc) especially given the susceptibility to virus of many of our mainstream varieties?
    - Possible introduction of a burn-off requirement in Scotland if over 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of field tolerance to minimise the levels of virus within input stocks for seed production.
    - Use of leaf testing to compliment in-field inspections; pertinent to those so-called 'dishonest varieties' that don't exhibit easily spottable symptoms
    - Future use of visual imaging within the scheme.
- **DEFRA – latest thinking on legislative change & provisional recommendation**
  - At the Classification Scheme Coordination meeting 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 2022, a provisional recommendation was put on the table re legislative change. This read – *Lobby for legislative change to allow marketing of seed that fails certification (in circumstances where a specific requirement is agreed between industry and authority*
  - As written this proposal created a degree of concern within industry.
    - The virus situation we saw in 2018 was extreme, but industry coped and supplied the seed required. We mustn't overreact
    - Industry doesn't believe it needs this change and in relation to virus
    - If the recommendation is taken forward the wording, positioning and possible practical application needs further consideration.

**ACTION** – Mark Taylor & Gerard Croft – Arrange meeting with Helen Fasham and DEFRA team to further discuss potential legislative changes.

- **Inspection & Certification**
  - Must make the most of historic data. Access to AHDB legacy website confirmed end of May 2022
  - Consider "virus reservoirs" and sampling to understand virus loading
  - Further consideration required around the "Risk Matrix" and its potential future application

**ACTION** Lynne Bradley – share APHA consultation results with NFU/Alex Godfrey to gain ware grower views?

#### **Key observations from the presentation – Christophe**

- The attached presentation reports the outcome of the 2021 growing crop season (SASA & APHA) and feedback on action points from previous meetings.
- Recommendations for sampling at pre-harvest appears to have been followed by the industry based on the increased rate of "early" submission of tuber samples for testing (SASA).
- Reminder of key points of the Scottish SPCS in relation to inspections & burn down are described below & attached (see "Growing Crop Leaflet 2021"):

#### **BURNING DOWN (PRE-BASIC ONLY):**

- Growers should note that all crops should be burned down no later than 14 days after the second or final inspection. The haulm must be effectively destroyed within that period. The haulm desiccant should kill foliage quickly to minimise the opportunity for spread of viruses or bacteria. Regrowth of the haulm should also be destroyed to prevent infection by aphid-borne viruses.
  - In cases where effective haulm destruction has not been achieved within the 14-day period, a further 7 days may be allowed in consultation with the inspector.

Such crops will be subject to an additional field inspection, which will determine the classification grade.

- If burning down is carried out before the second inspection, no Crop Inspection Report will

be issued. These burning down measures are intended to improve the overall health of Scottish seed.

To achieve maximum benefit, it is important that this is combined with early lifting to reduce the risk of disease build-up on the progeny tubers.

#### COMPULSORY BURNING DOWN (Plant health risk)

- Article 4 of The Plant Health (Potatoes) (Scotland) Order 2006 provides an explicit power to require that the grower of a potato crop (seed or ware) takes immediate action (within 72 hours of the service of a notice) to ensure the destruction of the haulm of a potato crop which has been determined by official inspection to present a clear plant health risk to other potato crops due to high levels of virus in the crop.
- Potato crop found to have more than 4% virus is at risk of a compulsory burndown

#### Action points:

- SASA will continue to carry-out a risk-based approach on targeted post-Harvest testing on varieties posing a significant virus health risk (based on SPCS data, propensity value, knowledge of tolerance for virus infection,...). Actions will be carried out in close collaboration between SASA and the broad potato industry (including major seed houses, growers, etc...)
  - GB testing laboratories will carry on partaking to Proficiency test to demonstrate test accuracy and fitness-for purpose.
  - SASA will update the varietal proficiency table (Scotland & GB) that can be accessed on SASA's website.
  - Growing crop inspections in Scotland will carry on according to the current scheme as described in the Growing Crop Leaflet 2021
  - SASA will chair the forthcoming Scottish Aphid-Borne Virus Working Group for whom one of the action point is to update recommendations for crop health management for seed & ware potato growers
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- **Sampling & Testing**
    - Continuing to build confidence and consistency with both the testing practices and explanation of test results
  - **Aphid Monitoring**
    - YWT is now a commercial service provide by Fera. "Pay to access" £500 per trapping site or to have access to the data. Otherwise "closed user group" This was recognised but limits the use of data as a national picture. Ideally the service would/could revert to a National service with a new operating model and finances – one for the future.
    - Notes received from Larissa post the meeting
    - In general numbers of peach-potato aphid were much lower than in 2020. Numbers of potato aphid were similar to recent year but higher in some Scottish regions, numbers of willow-carrot aphid are still increasing year on year and are now a major contributor to virus pressure in June.
    - Our web shop is now open for aphid monitoring orders <https://www.fera.co.uk/aphid-monitoring-seed-potatoes.html>. The website <https://aphmon.fera.co.uk/> will lock down on 1<sup>st</sup> April and only be available to subscribers after that date. We will send login instructions to everyone who purchases traps or who buys a data only subscription. The data only subscription option will be available via our web shop from w/c 21<sup>st</sup> March – further comms will go out to everyone who has expressed an interest. The data from previous years will also be available in spreadsheet format on the AHDB data store when they have set this up.

- Happy to answer any questions about any of the above and if there are any queries about aphid monitoring, please send them to [aphidmon@fera.co.uk](mailto:aphidmon@fera.co.uk) and myself or one of my team will respond.

**ACTION** - Larissa: Consider circulation of a summary of the season later in the year. Needs permissions around data sharing.

- **Technical update Scotland** – Eric Anderson Scottish Agronomy
  - Key notes
    - Make the most of 6-Step guide – **ACTION ALL**
    - Recognise the issues on insecticides for the coming season – Tepekki and InSyst. Support withdrawn by UPL. Need to understand impacts on 2022 spray programmes.
    - Loss of actives – are label changes clear enough and communicated to growers?
    - Opportunity for the approval of Mineral Oils and multiple applications post TI for seed only crops and not for human consumption
    - Olie-H is there an opportunity for an EA?
    - Don't underestimate PVYN
    - Take account of the increased carrot area in Scotland and aphid populations
    - **MUST** encourage greater uptake of ICM and the integrated approach – how do we achieve this?

**ACTION** on above – coordinate activity with Scottish Aphid Borne Virus working group to establish next steps and owners. Lobby activity on the use of mineral oils.

- **Technical update England** – Graham Tomalin VCS Potatoes
  - Key headlines from Graham
  - High risk potential this season
  - Option of EAMU for current oil approvals Cropspray 11E should be looked at. Anne Stone is still working in AHDB in the team which looks at EAMU's **ACTION GT** - approached for guidance and opportunity. Suggest It would be an approval for co application with insecticides beyond TI in a crop not intended for human consumption.
  - Greater mention of the ware grower required. We must remember they are the end customer in many cases
  - The virus test results we all receive are not always easy to trace to stock, often coded. **ACTION – APHA** – opportunity to provide greater clarity on results.
  - Real opportunity for APHA to statutory test stocks downgraded to B due to in field presence of virus as a standard (this is not done in many stocks currently) to protect the ware grower and to back up the system as a whole. Provides greater transparency. If results are found to be below tolerance it generates greater confidence and a lot more faith in the system
  - **ACTION APHA** – consider statutory testing for all stocks downgraded to B.
- **On-farm trials and management approaches** - Key observations from Sophie
  - Would it be pertinent to continue straw mulch trials given expected aphid/pest pressure – I think yes but perhaps more relevant to PB growers
  - The grid system for sampling offers better accuracy of actual levels of virus in field but the advice remains to balance the best of quality (accuracy) and quantity (time/resource) so post desiccation, pre-harvest W for 100 tubers
  - Explore the potential for using leaf testing to give risk-based approach to tuber testing
  - Ensure the basics are done well and best practice is known by all – seed and ware growers

#### **Essential Work**

- Reiterate Best Practice and get the basics right
  - Continued sharing of 6 & 4 Step Guides
- Opportunity with “Integrated Approach” must encourage greater uptake of ICM

- Lobby on the opportunity for the use of Mineral Oils
    - Highlight issues and impacts of groundkeepers
- KE – continue to engage with industry. Must consider communication routes post AHDB
  - Bring together collective information on regional trials & learnings
- Consider the opportunity to develop Propensity Data for England & Wales along the lines of the Scottish model