Alternaria solani (aka Early Blight) management in potatoes post mancozeb

As we now enter a foliar disease management era without mancozeb it is highly likely that we may see more foliage infection with Alternaria solani. Whilst mancozeb was not a powerful fungicide against this disease it was a useful preventative treatment, so greater vigilance will be required from now on.

To understand the lifecycle of this disease and the conditions that encourage its development see this link: https://potatoes.ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/alternaria

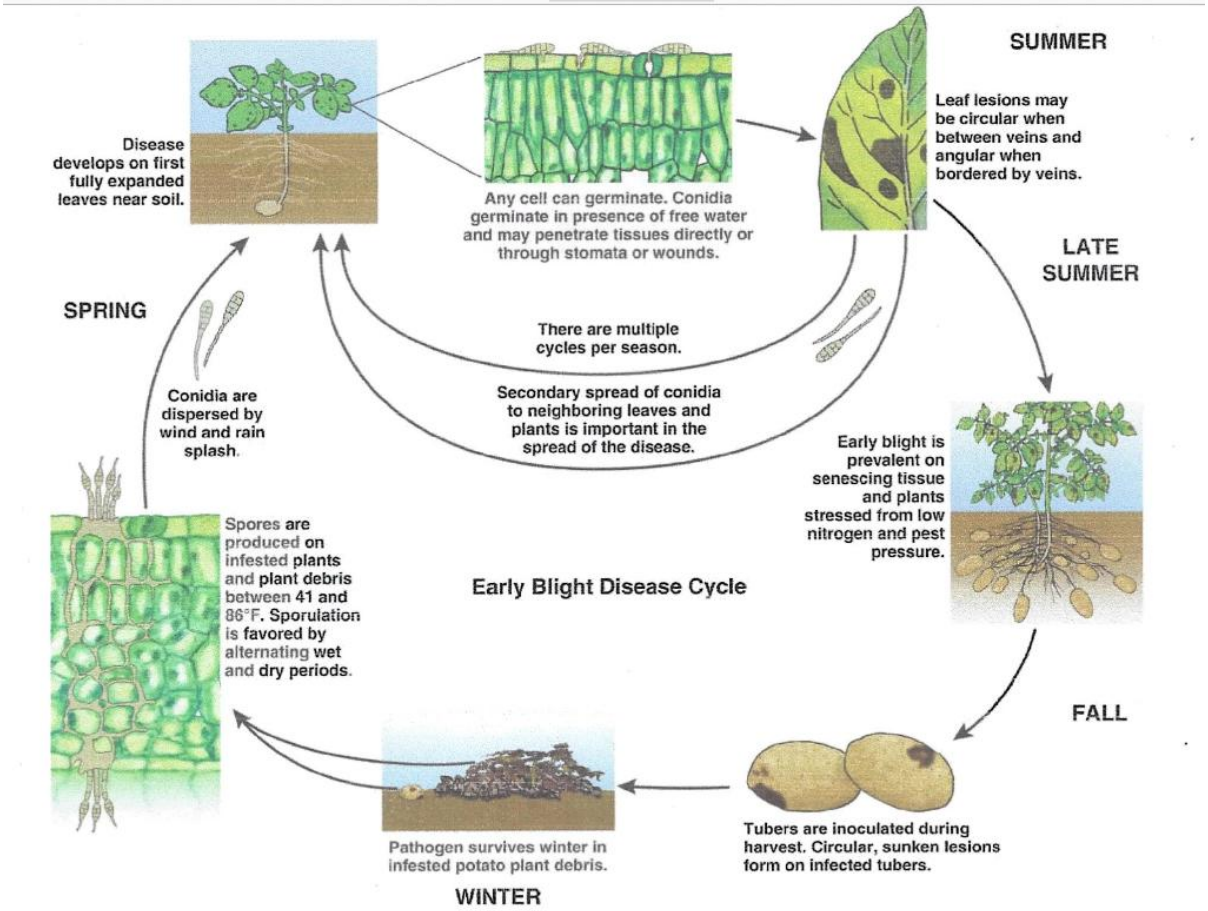

Figure 8. The disease cycle of the early blight pathogen, *Alternaria solani*.

There are other foliage symptoms that can be easily confused with Alternaria solani including nutrient related disorders and some other diseases, Verticillium, Botrytis and Alternaria alternata for example. This is especially so in Markies where misdiagnosis is common. If unsure of symptoms confirmation by laboratory analysis will help.

Disease management strategy:

Understand the susceptibility or tolerance of the variety grown to the disease. This information is often available from the breeder. Whilst there is no industry standard testing protocol for this disease most breeders will have made some assessment during variety development.

Minimise stress events on the growing crop. This mainly relates to nutrition (especially nitrogen) and water management. Periods of stress to the canopy will increase the risk of infection becoming established.

Minimise sources of inoculum in the field such as volunteer potatoes, potato debris and some weeds including nightshades. Longer intervals between potato crops can help with this.

Where treatment is required use an appropriate fungicide, with the understanding that products are preventative and not curative. See the link below to the Euroblight Alternaria section:

https://agro.au.dk/forskning/internationale-platforme/euroblight/alternaria/early-blight-fungicide-table/early-blight-fungicide-table

Careful consideration should be given to alternating chemistry and mixing actives from different fungicide resistance groups. For more details see: https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/the-fungicide-resistance-action-group-frag-uk and https://www.frac.info/ Strains of Alternaria solani do exist which are resistant to each of the potentially effective fungicide groups. However, alternating chemistry and starting at the right time will give the best chance of suppressing the disease.

Decision support tools can be useful in assisting with treatment timing. CropX (formerly Dacom) and MetQuest (from Agrii) are available in the UK. Information on European models can be found by following this link: https://agro.au.dk/forskning/internationale-platforme/euroblight/control-strategies/dss-overview

This document has been prepared by members of the Treater Group with the intention of raising awareness and providing some background information on the disease. May 2026.